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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)
14/12/02

Strategy, Culture and
School Development
Planning:
A Case Study of Staff
Perspectives in a
Secondary School

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Abstract

This case study is concerned with the perspectives of staff and governors in the secondary school where the researcher works as deputy head. The focus of the inquiry is school development planning and its relationship to wider strategic planning. The study further explores the School's culture and organisational structure in order to contextualise the findings and examine the School's capacity for change.

The author considers the difficulties of conducting case study research in one's own place of work and utilises a range of research instruments to improve the validity of the research approach. These include questionnaires and interview schedules designed by the researcher, together with research resources designed for the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) school improvement project and the Improving School Effectiveness Project (ISEP).

The study concludes that the School's development plan is generally considered to provide a sense of direction for the School but that there is little evidence of direct engagement with the plans produced. The senior team are perceived to provide purposeful leadership and the School's development structure, i.e. its capacity for improvement, is strong but there are concerns amongst many staff that decision-making is insufficiently collegiate. The author argues that this lack of involvement in key decision-making is the foundation for a model of strategy development that does not provide an authentic shared vision for the School as a whole. The School's aspirations to become a 'learning organisation' are compromised by a political structure that does not develop leadership density across the staff team. It is argued that the complexity and ambiguity of the School's culture, as reflected by the perspectives of its staff and governors, challenges the credentials of technicist models of strategic planning within this context. The result of an essentially

top-down approach to strategy formation is a staff team who partially disengage themselves from strategic implementation, i.e. the school development planning process.

From consideration of both the value and the constraints and limitations of this research study, the author concludes that there is a need for further case studies that explore the complexity and contradiction of the school setting and, in particular, action research studies that help the reader to understand the dynamic reality of school management from the perspectives of the practitioners themselves.

Key words/phrases:

School development plan; school improvement; strategy; strategic planning; culture; organisational structure; learning organisation.

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BPRS	Best Practice Research Scholarships
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EIPP	Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice
ERA	Education Reform Act
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IQEA	Improving the Quality of Education for All (<i>school improvement project associated with the University of Cambridge</i>)
ISEP	Improving School Effectiveness Project
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMS	Local Management of Schools
LPSH	Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MA	Master of Arts
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NLC	Networked Learning Community
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education

PANDA	Performance and Assessment (<i>a benchmarking model for evaluating school performance data</i>)
PCA	People-Centred Approach
SDP	School Development Plan
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMT	Senior Management Team
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (<i>an analytical tool designed to generate strategic options for consideration</i>)
TTA	Teacher Training Agency

1. Introduction

This study aims to make a distinctive contribution to the field of educational management by exploring the perspectives of managers, teachers, support staff and governors in a secondary school. The focus of the inquiry is the views of these individuals on the implementation of (and, perhaps, continuous development of) a strategy that has been designed through a process internal to the school. This strategy implementation is managed (overtly, at least) through the process of school development planning. The situational context in which this management activity takes place is further examined through an analysis of the School's culture, again from the perspectives of those involved.

This introductory chapter provides a brief overview of the substantive literature on school development planning, strategic management and the relevance of theories and models of strategic management developed for business contexts. This is supplemented with a short appraisal of the importance of considerations of culture and organisational structure for a study of this type. The chapter goes on to describe the School and the nature of the case study approach, including the role of the researcher. The methods of data collection are indicated and the chapter concludes with an explication of the seven research questions that provide the structure for the inquiry. The chapters that follow then explore these issues in more depth and then describe the findings of the research and their implications for professional practice and subsequent research in this area.

Since the influential work of David Hargreaves et al (1989), the practice of school development planning has become well established throughout the education system in the UK. School development plans, or school improvement plans as they are now commonly called (DfES, 2002a), are subject to the scrutiny of local education authority (LEA) advisers and

inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Typically, there is a formal timetable devised for the construction and implementation of these plans, together with an indication of how and when the effectiveness of the contents of the plan will be evaluated.

Development planning is a response to the management of multiple innovations and change and the perceived need for a systematic and whole-school approach to planning...

(Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994, p. 1).

It is interesting that Hargreaves and Hopkins (*ibid.*) themselves note that Ofsted found that school development planning had not, of itself, been considered a strength in their report on school inspections. Is this necessarily a criticism of school managers or is the model insufficiently developed? Hopkins (2000) notes that the research base on the effects of school development strategies is very weak. It is possible, though, to identify some problematic areas within the theory and practice of school development planning. Particular concerns are that the process and the plan should: involve a wide range of stakeholders; be linked closely to the school's budgetary mechanism; and, of course, have an impact on practice. There is evidence to suggest that these features are often not convincingly present.

In the mid-1990s, school development planning attracted some further criticism: that it did not sufficiently incorporate the relationship between the school and its environment and that it was insufficiently inclusive of the whole range of the school's operations (Fidler, 1996; Davies & Ellison, 1997). In short, in a period of rapid change and increased competitiveness, the model was considered insufficiently *strategic*.

The literature on strategic management in education, however, is not extensive. *Strategic planning* (Fidler, *op cit.*), *strategic intent* (Davies & Ellison, *op cit.*) and, more recently, *futures thinking* (Davies & Ellison, 1999) have been offered as models more suited to the increasingly turbulent and competitive conditions of modern day schooling. There seem to be different schools of thought within the educational management field over whether these approaches are alternative (Fidler, *op cit.*), or complementary (Davies & Ellison, 1999). Both Fidler and Davies and Ellison offer models and case studies for the purposive formation of a strategic plan, or intent. However, how useful are these models to school managers who are dealing with the management of a strategy that is in the process of being implemented and may be changing all the time? Fullan (1988, 1991, 1993, 2001) has written extensively about the process of managing change in schools and provides another useful perspective.

There is a plethora of work on strategy drawn from research conducted in the business world, but the relevance of this to education is questionable. Some educationalists (e.g. Bottery, 1992; Ball, 1999) have argued that business models are incompatible with the context of education, with its diffuse goals and the absence of a profit motive. Others, including West-Burnham (1994), have been more accommodating. From either perspective, further research in the area of strategy development and implementation in schools is required in order to provide the grounded theory that is needed for school managers to operate effectively in the present challenging and turbulent environment (Middlewood, 1998). Although educational management literature commonly describes the complexity of schools as organizations, the implications of this complexity for strategy formation and implementation have not been widely understood (Fidler, *op cit.*).

Strategy is implemented through the actions of individuals, who are influenced by their own beliefs and values and by the cultural norms of their organisation

and the wider context in which their organisation operates. These cultural patterns are highly influential and equally complex.

This invisible, taken-for-granted flow of beliefs and assumptions gives meaning to what people say and do. It shapes how they handle hundreds of daily transactions ... Culture consists of the stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behaviour over time.

(Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 7)

Strong, positive organisational cultures have been shown to foster successful school change and improvement efforts (Little, 1982; Louis & Miles, 1990; Deal & Peterson, *op cit.*). By investigating school culture I aim to gain an insight into its potential influence on strategy implementation. However, cultural profile exists in an interdependent relationship with its organisational structure. Effective management involves developing and maintaining systems and structures that are appropriate for the management activity that is required and flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances. To add to the challenge and complexity, Bolman and Deal (1984, 1989) consider that the basic dilemma in organisational design is the tension between *differentiation*, giving definition to roles and responsibilities, and *integration*, emphasising the social dimension of interaction and the value of collegial approaches. Other educationalists and researchers (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Smith *et al.*, 1998a, 1998b; Hopkins *et al.*, 1996, 1997; Ainscow *et al.*, 1994, 2000) have considered the conditions required for a school to manage and support innovation effectively.

What seems most striking is the absence, in the literature, of a convincing commentary that brings together the formal, purposive, bureaucratic process of school improvement planning with the 'messy' reality of school management, with its ambiguity and subjectivity, its micropolitics and cultural pluralism.

This study describes the *process* of strategy implementation and the *context*, i.e. the culture and organisational structure in which this takes place, from the perspectives of a range of staff (teaching and non-teaching) and, to an extent, governors. This adds to the conceptual density of our understanding of strategy, culture and school development planning in schools.

The characteristics of the case study are described next, together with an indication of the research design and methodologies employed.

The inquiry is a single-institution case study of the secondary school in which the researcher works as deputy headteacher. The School (Westwood St. Thomas') is a 13-18 comprehensive in Salisbury. A summary of the socio-economic characteristics of the school catchment area and the educational system in Salisbury as a whole is included in Appendix 11. The School comprises approximately seven hundred students across the 13-18 age range. At the time when the research activity began, there were forty seven teaching staff (six of whom taught on a part-time basis), twenty non-teaching/support staff (six of whom were employed part-time) and nineteen members of the Governing Body. The School has Foundation status: this gives it considerable autonomy in managing its own affairs, though the LEA delegates funds to the School and plays a role in setting targets for students' achievements.

The researcher himself had been in post as deputy head for three years when the fieldwork began in September 2000. The School then soon had a new Chair of Governors and a new Vice Chair of Governors (both appointed in October 2000). The Headteacher was in his second year in post and the other deputy head had previously been a senior teacher at the School and had been appointed to this position in September 2000. In summary, then, the most strategic positions in the management hierarchy were held by relative newcomers.

Examination outcomes for 1998 and 1999 were very low in relation to national and county figures and also in relation to benchmarking analyses that compare this level of performance with the results of 'similar schools'. The School's Ofsted inspection, in October 1998, concluded that strengths and weaknesses were broadly in balance. The report noted that low levels of literacy and numeracy on entry to the School were not sufficiently addressed and greater coherence was needed between different levels of management to facilitate better monitoring of standards. However, the quality of relationships between staff and students and the pastoral support systems were rated highly.

The new headteacher resolved to place professional development at the centre of the School's strategy for improvement and to keep a sharp focus on the processes of teaching and learning. This was exercised, in part, through giving the deputy heads the responsibility for the 'Quality of Learning' and the 'Quality of Teaching' respectively. The former post centred on curriculum design and investigating the learning experience from the perspectives of the students. The latter position involved raising the profile of professional development and facilitating the improvement of teaching skills. This resulted in a radically revised curriculum and some innovative approaches to professional development, such as the School's in-house MA (Education) programme. By September 2001, examination results were showing promising signs of improvement. For example, the proportion of students gaining five or more 'C' grade GCSEs had improved from 24% to 34% over a three-year period.

In summary, over the period that the fieldwork spanned, i.e. September 2000 to January 2002, the School was characterised by the following features:

- a new leadership group;
- improving outcomes from a relatively low base level; and
- a strong commitment to professional development.

By conducting a case study I aimed to describe, in convincing detail, the subjectivity of strategic management and the multiplicity of values and perspectives that constitute a school's culture. This report is written using the first person as to do otherwise would, implicitly, be to suggest that an 'objective' account has been written that denies my values, beliefs and professional identity.

To write the researcher out of the report is to deny the dependency of the data on the researcher's presence.

(Ball, 1993, p. 46)

As both researcher and deputy headteacher of the school, I operated in a variety of roles: as internal researcher, consultant and change agent. Given the responsibilities held and the methodology chosen, which featured a variety of research techniques, a multiplicity of roles was both necessary and unavoidable. The validity of the findings is grounded in the maintenance of an awareness of *reactivity*, i.e. changed behaviour of participants as a function of the researcher's activity. Furthermore, the interpretive strength of the work is governed by the researcher's *reflexivity*, i.e. awareness of the ways in which selectivity, perception, background and inductive processes and paradigms shape the research. Cohen *et al.* (2000) describe reflexivity with reference to Cooley's (1902) notion of the 'looking glass self'. The researcher exposes personal values and experience, the interpretive frame through which data are examined and conclusions are drawn.

No claims of generalisability are made regarding the detailed findings. Nevertheless, the study offers educational managers, advisers and researchers insights into the complexity of strategic management in the context of a secondary school. Furthermore, through the use of multiple research techniques, the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches used to

investigate culture and organisational structure are appraised and this comparative analysis is also of potential benefit to the agents listed above.

Data are collected using a variety of techniques, comprising:

- semi-structured interviews involving a cross-section of staff and governors representing all positions in the management hierarchy and focusing upon the school improvement planning process and its relationship to wider strategy; and
- a battery of questionnaire surveys and a board game to investigate organisational culture, structure and development characteristics.

These data are further supported by a documentary analysis of school improvement planning documentation, describing both the processes and the outcomes.

The following seven questions provide the structure for the inquiry. They are organised in sections that relate to the three key areas of interest.

Strategy and strategy development

- i. How do the Head and Chair of Governors conceptualise strategy and the way that strategy develops in the School; and how do these views compare with the perspectives of other members of staff?

The school development plan: its role in the development and implementation of strategy

- ii. How do the School's staff and governors view the form of the school development plan and their involvement in its construction?

- iii. How do the staff judge the suitability of the process through which resources are allocated to support the school development plan?
- iv. How much reference do the staff and governors make to the school development plan and how do they feel that it affects practice?

Culture, organisational structure and the capacity for change

- v. How do the staff and governors describe the School's culture and how close are their descriptions of reality to their declared ideals?
- vi. What are staff and governor perceptions of the School's organisational structure and how do these perceptions compare with their own preferences for organisational structure?
- vii. What is the School's capacity for change and how could this be developed further?

This study does not investigate in detail the processes through which broad medium and long term strategies are developed in the School, i.e. the linked activities of strategic analysis and strategic choice (Johnson and Scholes, 1993, provide a comprehensive model). A detailed appraisal of the creation of strategy would be a valuable contribution to the field of educational management, but this is not within the scope of this work. The research questions, which are listed below with a commentary to explain their significance, provide a structure for the study that is replicated through each of the chapters of the thesis.

i. How do the Head and Chair of Governors conceptualise strategy and the way that strategy develops in the School; and how do these views compare with the perspectives of other members of staff?

Increasingly, headteachers are expected to manage their schools *strategically*. ‘Strategic Management and Leadership’ is the compulsory component of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), the qualification that signals readiness for the responsibilities of this important post. Similarly, ‘Strategic Direction and Development of the School’ is the first of five key areas listed in the Teacher Training Agency’s (TTA) ‘National Standards for Headteachers’ (TTA, 1997).

Notions of strategic management are frequently drawn from contexts quite different to the practical realities and ethical dimensions of school management. For this case study, the Headteacher’s views on strategy and how to manage strategically provide an important perspective for the research. However, it is the Governing Body that has the statutory responsibility to set the School’s aims and objectives, to agree policies, plans and targets and generally take ‘a strategic view’ of the School (DfES, 2001a). The view of the Chair of Governors is also therefore centrally pertinent to my investigation into the complexities of strategy development and implementation. Where other staff offer opinions on the nature of strategy, how do these compare with the view from top management? Comparisons between conceptual frameworks have the potential to increase understanding of strategy development in the School.

The expectation that formal plans should be written to guide strategic management activity has been firmly established since the early 1970s precipitated by the highly influential text *Corporate Strategy* by H. Igor

Ansoff (1965). However, strategic planning as a purposive rational process has been challenged, most notably by Henry Mintzberg (1994). In considering the efficacy of formal planning processes, the perspectives of the chief executive in an organisation (the head and/or chair of governors in a school) are, at best, partial and, at worst, misleading. By exploring the perspectives of individuals at other positions in the school I aimed to understand the extent to which plans impact on their work, providing direction and support or producing obstacles to effectiveness.

Schools have been subject to criticism on the grounds that their plans are too short-term and reactive. This may be a legitimate response to the environments in which they are created and the nature of the business of education.

Alternatively, such concerns may be well conceived and, in order to create their own futures, school leaders may need to create long-term visions for their organisations and develop planning processes that span longer time periods.

What are the perspectives of staff in relation to this issue of the longevity of strategic plans? What are the practical difficulties when viewed from different positions in the management's hierarchy and how compelling is the argument for long-term planning?

ii. How do the School's staff and governors view the form of the school development plan and their involvement in its construction?

The school development plan describes the priorities for the School's development over a one-year period and, in brief, over an extended period of three to five years. It comprises a set of action plans that are intended to operationalise the School's current strategy for improvement. Strategy is outlined in broad detail for the institution as a whole in the preface for the plan and through the content of specific whole-school action plans. Teams and

individuals with responsibility for specific initiatives engage (in principle) in strategic thinking (to a degree) in the construction of further actions plans that operationalise (in intention) the broader statements of intent. Therefore, strategy (albeit with regard to a restricted time-scale) is both developed and implemented at this level. The form of the plan and the planning process itself influence the way that strategy is subsequently implemented. Does the form of the plan suit its function, and is its function perceived to be worthwhile by those who are charged with its implementation? How involved do staff and governors feel in the construction of the plan and how involved do they wish to be? Do they view their role as strategic or operational?

iii. How do the staff judge the suitability of the process through which resources are allocated to support the school development plan?

In order to implement a strategy, resources are required. These resources typically include equipment, teaching resources and consumables. However, they also include less tangible resources such as the time to work together as a team and opportunities for training and development. The management of these resources is an important part of the implementation of the school development plan, though this part of the process does not feature strongly in the research literature. There are decisions to be made regarding the extent to which funds are devolved to teams or controlled centrally. Furthermore, there are other issues concerning the level of detail that is required from team leaders in the costing of their action plans and the micropolitics of the budgetary mechanism.

iv. How much reference do the staff and governors make to the school development plan and how do they feel that it affects practice?

School development planning, as conceived by Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991, 1994), is a collegial process involving staff (albeit teaching staff) throughout the organisation. Also central to its principles is the practice of monitoring progress against the targets set in the plan and this also is essentially a team activity. How consistently does this happen in practice and, where monitoring and discussion of the plan are infrequent, why is this? How do staff account for such ‘slippage’ in the attention that is given to the plan? More fundamentally, how significantly do staff feel that the plan affects their practice and the developing practice of their teams? How does the process of monitoring progress affect practice?

v. How do the staff and governors describe the School’s culture and how close are their descriptions of reality to their ideals?

Hargreaves (1995) argues that in pursuing a strategy of school improvement, schools are best served by gaining a better understanding of their own culture rather than trying to emulate the characteristics of effective others. By examining the gap between staff perceptions of reality and their ideal school culture, it is possible to expose what Whitehead (1989, 1993) refers to as the ‘living contradiction’ between values and actions. Significant differences between ideals and actualities are likely to cause frustration and affect morale and organisational effectiveness.

vi. What are staff and governor perceptions of the School's organisational structure and how do these perceptions compare with their own preferences for organisational structure?

Without a direct and primary focus on organisational factors it is unlikely that (single innovations or specific projects) will have much of a reform impact, and whatever impact there is will be short-lived ... school improvement efforts that ignore these deeper organisational conditions are 'doomed to tinkering'

(Fullan, 1988, p. 29).

Decisions are made and expectations are communicated through both formal and informal school structures. A better understanding of the existing structures and how these are viewed by staff provides the potential for effecting a shift in the School's culture, as institutional cultures stand in dialectical relationship to their underlying architecture (Ainscow *et al*, 1994).

viii. What is the School's capacity for change and how could this be developed further?

Work in the fields of school effectiveness and school improvement identifies particular characteristics, or *conditions*, that relate to a school's capacity for change. These conditions are characteristics of the school's *development structure*, which is related to the maturity and sophistication of its culture of innovation. An examination of the School's development conditions generates data with the potential to increase understanding of where its strengths and weaknesses lie, in this regard. This contributes to the generation of further strategic options for the School.

The next chapter considers the substantive foundation for the case study; the methodological literature is discussed in Chapter 3, together with an account of the research approach and methodological techniques employed.

2. Literature review

This literature review begins with an introductory commentary (**‘Managerialism and the relatability of management theory to the context of education’**) arguing that a multiplicity of perspectives, drawn from a variety of contexts and traditions, should inform an examination of strategy and its potential contribution to educational management. The main body of the review is then structured into three broad sections, each of which corresponds to one of the three key research questions for the study.

The section **‘Strategy and strategy development’** explores a variety of perspectives on strategy and its development across the broad field of strategic management. Within the educational context, more recent concepts of *strategic intent* and *futures thinking* are also examined. Collectively, this provides the conceptual framework for research question **i.**, which investigates the perspectives of the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, and the views of staff over the time-scale of strategic plans. This is followed by **‘The school development plan: its role in the implementation of strategy’**, which relates to questions **ii.**, **iii.** and **iv.** and examines the principles of school development planning. The review concludes with a section (**‘Culture, organisational structure and the capacity for change’**) which focuses on the importance of values and beliefs and both formal and informal organisational structures and, in particular, the potential of these characteristics for increasing the internal capacity for change. This provides the theoretical basis for the interpretation of data collected to address research questions **v.**, **vi.** and **vii.** Finally, the key issues are summarised in a short concluding section.

The review begins with a consideration of the debate over the transferability, or relatability, of management theory that is often developed with a business context in mind, to the context of education.

Managerialism and the relatability of management theory to the context of education

Educational management is a relatively new field; West-Burnham (1994) dates its emergence in Britain from 1970. Some commentators on educational management (e.g. Ball & Goodson, 1985; Bottery, 1992) have been critical of what they describe as the *new managerialism* that has arisen from the application of management theory in an educational context. Ball (1999, p. 92) describes the mechanistic, dehumanising characteristics of this approach:

Pragmatism and cold calculation, ... form the basis of managerialism. Professional judgement and debate over values – what schooling is for – are displaced by the requirements of maximising income, balancing budgets, recruiting customers and marketing. Efficiency is asserted over ethics. Humanistic commitments like the service ethic are replaced by managerialism's promiscuity of values.

His reasoning is compelling and concerns about the pernicious influence of Taylorist (Taylor, 1911) managerialism may be well founded. Watson and Crossley (2001), in their study of strategic management in the further education sector, reflect this concern in their complaint that the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) model for strategic planning is based on a business model that does not reflect the major critical discourse around rational strategic processes (Mintzberg, 1994; Alvesson & Willmott, 1996).

However, the concept of managerialism does not represent well either the breadth of management theory or the range of management practice in schools today. As illustration, West-Burnham (*op cit.*) explains how Ball and Goodson (*op cit.*) offer 'participation' as an alternative to 'management', a category error that denies the option of inclusive approaches to management. For West-

Burnham (*op cit.*, pp. 28-9), management is a generic concept that is relevant to all organisations and is:

- a verb, not a noun ('management is doing things, making things happen');
- a contingent concept (there is no 'one best way');
- a process that is improved through the adoption, integration and assimilation of grounded theory, i.e. theory that is developed and tested in a context that is relevant to the context in which it is to be applied;
- concerned with both values and outcomes;
- a heuristic process that is improved through a reflective approach: 'a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skillful' (Schön, 1987, p.31);
- expressed in behaviour (as management is purposive by nature, the ultimate criterion for effectiveness is the extent to which intentions are translated into observable change);
- about being responsive and about developing the capacity to change.

In common with Ball and Goodson (*op cit.*), Bottery (*op cit.*, p. 130) is also justifiably critical of managerialist approaches rooted in models of industrial practice and business management theory. He argues that:

... (management) theory must be transformed before it can be accepted, and it must be implemented by those who know the particular institutions.

Given the generic nature of management, as articulated by West-Burnham, it would be too conservative an approach to exclude the contribution that can be made from management theory that has been developed and tested in different contexts. This contribution will not be made effectively through an 'off the shelf' implementation. Cogent, plausible theories will need re-interpretation, or rejection, in the light of the values and realities of the educational context to

which they are applied. Wilson (1999) cites a number of writers (Everard & Morris, 1996; Bush, 1995; Davies *et al*, 1990) who consider that the wholesale transference of management theory to education is inappropriate and, in some cases, damaging. He goes on (*op cit.*, p.10) to note that this is unremarkable:

In fact it is difficult to imagine *any* organisation to which management theory could be applied without some contextual adjustment, reflecting the nature of research in the social sciences.

The prudent researcher therefore proceeds with caution but, in an examination of management theory, does not exclude concepts and models that have been developed in and for different contexts. In order to understand what it means to manage strategically in a school context, it is helpful to gain a good understanding of strategy and strategic management in the wider literature but important also to be careful to consider the context in which this theory would be tested and developed. The literature on strategy and strategy development, both in the wider management field and within the educational context, is examined in the next section of the review.

Strategy and strategy development

Strategy

An appraisal of the theory on strategy is not straightforward as it has a wide variety of meanings and definitions. Johnson and Scholes (1993), leading authorities on strategic management, consider that:

Strategy is the *direction* and *scope* of an organisation over the *long term*: ideally, which matches its *resources* to its changing *environment*, and in particular its *markets*, *customers* or *clients* so as to meet *stakeholder* expectations.

(p. 10)

More simply, Quinn (1980, p. 7) defines strategy as:

‘the pattern or plan that integrates an organisation’s major goals, policies and action sequences into a cohesive whole.’

Characteristically giving the concept greater breadth of definition, Mintzberg *et al.* (1998) consider that there are five types of definition of strategy (five ‘P’s). Strategy is a:

- plan (a guide to action);
- pattern (an emerging trend);
- perspective (a way of doing things);
- position (in relation to competitors and the environment in general); or
- ploy (a manoeuvre to outwit an opponent).

(pp. 11-15)

They further contend that various ‘schools of thought’ conceptualise strategy in different ways, advocating approaches that use any of the five types of definition listed above. This influences their orientation to the way that they conceive the development of strategy.

Fidler (1996, p. 3) identifies two dichotomies, namely whether strategy should be:

- i. *explicit* or *implicit*; and
- ii. *prospective* or *emergent*.

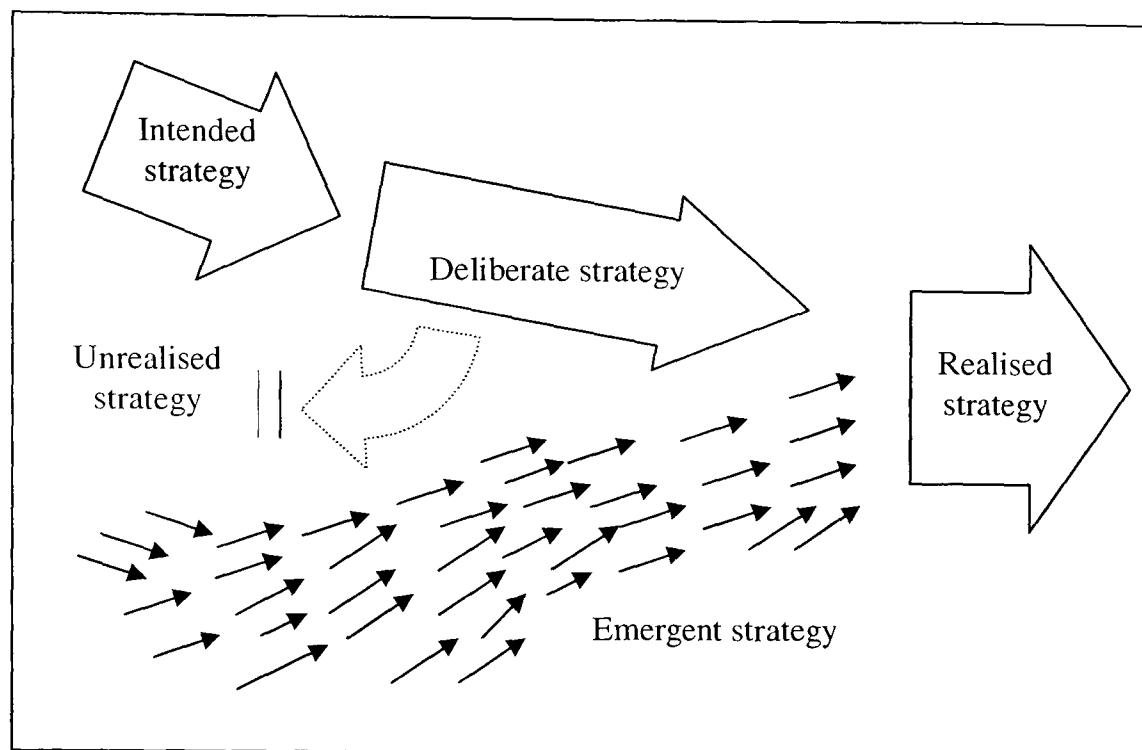
On the first issue, he quotes Steiner (1979, p. 10), who considers that ‘...a formal system can, and should, help managers sharpen their intuitive-anticipatory inputs into the planning process.’. In contrast, he cites Barry (1986) who suggests that talented leaders may not need formal written strategies in order to know how to proceed but may choose to make them explicit in order to communicate their vision.

On the second question, Mintzberg (in Quinn *et al.*, 1988, p. 4) considers that:

Strategies may be looked at as either statements to guide action or results of actual decision behaviour. One, therefore, must look at the actual emerging pattern of the enterprise’s operant goals, policies and major programmes to see what its true strategy is.

Mintzberg (1994) defines four types of strategy: *emergent*, *intended*, *deliberate* and *realised*, in his illustration of how a current (emergent) strategy is changed into a new (realised) one. With the onset of a new intended strategy, only part of the intention will, in general, be implemented – this is the deliberate strategy. The deliberate strategy impacts upon the emergent strategy to produce a realised strategy. The degree of deviation between the realised strategy and the intended strategy shows the extent to which the expected outcome was matched. This model is shown below in Diagram 2.1:

Diagram 2.1 – Mintzberg's emergent and realised strategies



(*ibid.*, p. 24)

Whilst Mintzberg attempts to synthesize potentially conflicting notions of strategy, there are other writers who propose a continuum that describes the way that strategy is conceived in organisations. Fidler (*op cit.*) recognizes two distinctively different approaches to strategy: *systemic* and *processual*. A systemic approach to strategy requires purposeful direction and creation, whereas a processual approach involves decision making and a detection and determination of strategy through an examination of the outcomes that emerge. Fidler advocates the former of the two approaches but stresses the need for feedback and sensitivity to changing conditions. He also recognizes that a deterministic notion of strategy is naïve and that it is more realistic to consider an approach to strategy that 'deals in probability'.

Some researchers have specifically considered the nature of strategy in organisations where financial profit is not the motivating factor and this is examined in the next section.

Strategy in public sector not-for-profit organizations

Fidler (1996, p. 3) considers that strategy in profit-making organizations has two facets:

- i. deciding which business to be in (corporate strategy); and
- ii. deciding how best to conduct that business.

He quotes Porter (1985, p. 11) who considers that for private sector businesses, the fundamental basis of above-average performance in the long run is *sustainable competitive advantage*. This competitive edge is gained, according to Porter, through *differentiation*, i.e. choosing a basic strategy and then staying with it. Different strategies, he argues, require actions that tend to be inconsistent with each other. Fidler suggests that this concept may also be useful to non-profit organizations as it could encourage them to acknowledge and use their basic strengths. He considers that for not-for-profit organizations the decision regarding which business to be in is often redundant. Schools, for example, are in the business of education and this is, to a large extent, not negotiable.

For Fidler, the most distinctive feature of not-for-profit organizations is the absence of a direct relationship between client satisfaction and income. This creates a political dimension that affects the formation of strategy. Johnson and Scholes (1993, p.28) note that the conception of competition is often different in the public sector. Competition is often for *resource inputs* (students in the case of schools) rather than customers who are detached from the business of the organisation. This leads to a greater need to demonstrate *value for money* in outputs. The use of performance indicators and competitive tendering have become increasingly common in the public sector, as have value for money judgements made by inspection teams. Bowman (1990) argues convincingly that well-conceived strategic management is especially important for public

sector organisations like schools due to the difficulties in measuring performance and the need for strong direction in the absence of clear, unambiguous success indicators. Johnson and Scholes (*op cit.*) also recognize that *acceptability* in strategic choice is more important in the public sector than in commercial organizations. Organisations that exist in order to provide a public service will be subject to greater public scrutiny and need to recognise this in their strategy formation.

Lumby (1999), reflecting on strategic planning in the further education sector, argues that where private-sector businesses concern themselves with strategic positioning against their competitors, college managers have had to cope with sustaining a competitive advantage whilst coping with the incoherence of government directives (governmental 'drift'). This argument applies, in varying degrees, to other phases of the education sector and, more widely, to other public-sector organisations.

In the next section, consideration is given to the implications of these conceptions of strategy for the practice of strategic management.

Strategic management

Fidler (1996, p. 50) defines strategic management as 'the creation and implementation of strategy in response to and in anticipation of future events and trends in the outside world.' Without strategic management, he considers that we are left with crisis management. Pascale (1990) concurs, arguing that having a strategy is no guarantee of success, but that lasting success is impossible without one. Johnson and Scholes (1993, p. 16) describe strategic management as:

- ambiguous;
- complex;
- non-routine;
- organisation-wide;
- fundamental;
- involving significant change; and
- environment or expectations driven.

Fidler (*op cit.*) adds a further characteristic to the list: the need to be pro-active - to interact with and actively change the environment.

Strategic management is a central issue for organisational leaders (in schools, or otherwise). In order to manage strategically it is helpful to have an understanding of how strategy is developed and this is the focus of the next section.

Strategy development

Johnson and Scholes (1993) outline six explanations for the way that strategy develops in an organisation. They consider that the *cultural* and *political* views are best considered as dimensions of the process of strategy formation, whereas the other perspectives are competing, or at least contingent, prescriptions or descriptions. Perhaps the most well-established of the views of strategy development is the *planning view*, and this is examined first.

Planning view

The planning view (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998; Johnson & Scholes, *op cit.*) of strategy development is the more traditional of the models. The prescription is that resource-based strengths and weaknesses are matched with opportunities and threats in the environment and this generates strategic options. Systems are

put in place to design and manage the programmes that are underpinned by the options chosen. Mintzberg *et al.* (*op cit.*) make a distinction between the *design school* and the *planning school*. These are schools of thought that share the same basic premises, with the exception that the latter predicates a highly formalised process of strategy formation whereas the former is concerned to make the process a simple one. They are two different approaches *within* the broader planning view postulated here.

Johnson and Scholes (*op cit.*) consider that the planning process is a useful mechanism for working through the components of strategy. However, they point out that as it is not possible to isolate the planning process from the performance of an organisation it is not sensible to conclude that adopting a highly systematised approach to planning results in improved performance. They further stress the need for planning processes to take place in the context of an understanding of social, cultural and political considerations. Strategic planning is subject to a number of dangers or constraints. I have summarized these as follows:

- *Implementation Gap* - people are not directly influenced by the content of plans;
- *Ownership* – individuals may not feel that they ‘own’ strategy conceived by senior management;
- *Complexity* – where individuals are only involved in part of a complex planning process, they may be unable to see ‘the big picture’;
- *Confusion* – between the Plan (a written document) and the strategy (the organization’s long-term direction);
- *Ivory Tower* – the process and the Plan may be disconnected from the real issues faced by employees;
- *Information Overload* – a surfeit of data, much of which is of no practical value;

- *Determinism* – an obsession with predicting future performance on the basis of past results (tends to disregard a changing environment);
- *Resource Driven* – thinking constrained by the financial situation dictated by previous years' decisions.

Some further, more sophisticated, criticisms of the planning (or design) school are made by Mintzberg *et al.* (*op cit.*, pp. 33-42, pp. 63-77):

- *Changing capability (similar to 'Determinism', above):*
How does an organisation know its strengths and weaknesses and how sure can planners be of the breadth and longevity of these features? The planning view seems to offer a static model for a dynamic world.
- *Relationship between structure and strategy:*
The planning view predicates that the structure needs to be designed to fit the strategy. This is unrealistic as structures cannot be assembled and disassembled at will. Strategy and structure are indeed closely related but they are not ordered sequentially in this way.
- *Flexibility and permanence (similar to 'Confusion', above)*
The planning view offers no insights into the resolution of the tension that exists between the virtue of communicating a clear strategy for a period of time (and hence potentially 'locking this into the consciousness of stakeholders') and yet acting appropriately in the context of a changing environment. Osborn (1998) describes this tension as the *agility paradox*: flexibility is needed in order to be appropriately responsive but stability is needed in order for an organisation to build an understanding of its strengths.

Planners may be rightfully concerned about Rambo-type behaviour in management – ‘fire-fire-fire’ in every direction, with no aiming. But managers must be equally wary of planning behaviour that amounts to ‘Ready. Aim. Aim’.

(Mintzberg, 1994, p. 292)

Weindling (1997, pp. 220-2) uses the term ‘strategic planning’ in a broader, more flexible sense stressing the differences between planning that is simply long-term and planning that is properly strategic. He seems implicitly to accept Mintzberg’s critique of strategic planning, the difference in the usage of the phrase being essentially semantic.

In his critique of strategic planning, Bell (1998) offers the concepts of ‘separated knowing’ and ‘connected knowing’, which were developed through an investigation into styles of problem solving by female managers in schools (Tarule, 1998). He argues that the abstract, Newtonian nature of the prevalent planning paradigm detaches managers from personal relationships within the organisation (separated knowledge). What is needed is connected knowledge.

Connected knowledge is a collaborative process of looking for what is right by accepting the validity of a range of different perspectives.

(Bell, *op cit.*, p. 458)

This perspective correlates with the *cultural view*, which is examined later in this chapter. The planning view also contrasts sharply with the *natural selection view*, which is considered next.

Natural selection view

The basic tenet of this argument is that the environment is such an influential force that the best that an organisation can do is to respond to the environment; all but the largest of organisations have very little real choice. Strategy then develops through a process similar to Darwinian natural selection. The best strategy is to adapt in order to improve your standing relative to other organisations. Johnson and Scholes (1993, p. 40) consider that this view is, for many organisations, unnecessarily pessimistic. The degree of strategic choice available varies from one type of institution to another and, regardless of the circumstances, managers need to develop the skills and attitudes to manage change.

A perspective that combines features of both the planning and natural selection schools of thought is the view provided by the logical incrementalists.

Logical incremental view

This view emphasizes the need for managerial flexibility and creativity. Strategy is developed through the perpetuation of a strong core business combined with small-scale experimentation to test out alternative approaches and operate opportunistically. 'Logical incrementalism', a term coined by Quinn (1980), is an evolutionary process: change is gradual and planning is, of necessity, limited. Johnson and Scholes further compare logical incrementalism with the game of chess, with its emphasis on '...possibilities and probabilities of moves that are not too far ahead' (*op cit.*, p. 45). This conception is reminiscent of the planning paradigm, having connotations of detached executives outlining and updating their master plans:

The real strategy tends to evolve as internal decisions and external events flow together to create a new, widely shared consensus for action among key members of the top management team. In a well-run organisation, managers pro-actively guide these streams of actions and events incrementally towards conscious strategies.

(Quinn, *op cit.*, p. 15)

Over time, these actions produce a shift in direction (an emergent strategy).

A further perspective is provided by the visionary view of strategy development and this is discussed below.

Visionary view

Strategy development in some organisations may be explained as the function of intuitive, visionary leadership. This may be characterised by an overhaul of previously established ways of working and a lack of attention to the detail of planning. Viewed differently, visionary management can simply be seen as the result of persons in positions of responsibility bringing sets of assumptions from one organisational paradigm to another.

Johnson and Scholes (*op cit.*) suggest that visionary leadership exercises an important influence on strategy development. However, they also make reference to examples of organisations where a vision has outlived its relevance and usefulness. Visionary, or *charismatic*, leadership is fragile and unstable because it demands obedience or faith in its mission (Allix, 2000). Such ready compliance cannot often be sustained in the long term. Visionary strategies, therefore, may be short lived and, without supporting strategic management structures and processes in place, organisational effectiveness may diminish rapidly.

Cultural view

This perspective highlights the shared assumptions that members of an organisation hold. Organisational culture comprises the explicit beliefs and values that underpin an organisation (its mission statement or vision), the norms that are taken for granted ('the way things are done around here') and also the implicit assumptions that are rarely mentioned and may be considered unproblematic. Johnson and Scholes (1993, p. 47) describe this frame of reference as the *organisational paradigm*. The paradigm is a condition for meaningful communication and effective decision making. Without a common frame of reference we are left with heightened ambiguity. However, the paradigm, by its nature, is also potentially a conservative influence that acts to prevent change. Strategy, from this perspective, should be viewed in relation to the organisational paradigm. According to Schein (1985, p. 2), '...the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture.'. In an educational context, Bush (1998, pp. 32-33) argues that without the cultural perspective, approaches to strategic planning have been found lacking:

The increase in culture as an increasingly significant aspect of school and college management may be explained, in part, as dissatisfaction with the limitations of the traditional bureaucratic model. The latter's emphasis on the technical aspects of institutions appears to be inadequate for schools and colleges aspiring for excellence. The stress on the intangible world of values and attitudes helps to produce a more balanced portrait of educational institutions.

Cultural considerations are examined in more detail later in the review, as organisational culture is one of the three main areas of focus for this study. The cultural view is a related, complementary perspective to the *political view* of strategy formation.

Political view

The development of strategy takes place in the context of a complex set of political processes: negotiation, bargaining, coercion and withholding information; the influence of these political forces will vary from one organisation to another. However, it is clear that strategic decisions may not always be taken on their merit, but in relation to the vested interests or opinions of those powerful individuals with the status to hold sway (Hoyle, 1986). The organisational paradigm is also a major influence as individuals may line up opinions with the paradigm to illustrate corporate solidarity and gain promotion. This is a perspective that it would be naïve to overlook.

Johnson and Scholes argue that all six of the explanations are useful in an examination of how strategy develops. They recommend a framework that 'combines the rigour of analysis with the reality of the processes of management' (*op cit.*, p. 69). Schwenk (1989, pp. 177–8) also stresses the need for multiple perspectives:

Much research on strategic decision-making and strategic change ... challenges the view that decision outcomes are the product of rational choice.

A further, distinctive contribution to the theory on strategy development is the concept of the *learning organisation* (Senge, 1990, 1992; Holly & Southworth, 1989). This view incorporates the development of staff into strategies for organisational growth. In the context of this study, it is interesting to note that Mintzberg *et al.* (1998) consider that the 'learning organisation' concept seems especially helpful in the context of 'professional-type' institutions, operating in highly complex environments, where the knowledge to create strategy is widely diffused. Mintzberg *et al.* (*ibid.*) give the example of a hospital, but could surely equally have suggested a secondary school.

The ‘learning organisation’

For Senge, a ‘learning organisation’ is ‘an organisation that is continually expanding its capacity to create its own future’ (1992, p.14). He further argues that individual learning is a prerequisite of organisational learning. This theory parallels the People Centred Approach (PCA) to school improvement, wherein:

Change is accomplished first by individuals and then by institutions.

(Marsh, 1994, p. 35)

Senge’s model predicates a radical reappraisal of the meaning and function of continuous professional development and training:

To see people’s development as a means towards the organisation’s ends devalues the relationship that can exist between individual and organisation.

(*op. cit.*, pp. 144-5)

The failure of organisations to motivate their staff to sustained high performance is, in part, attributed to the failure to meet their ‘higher needs’: Maslow’s *self-respect* and *self-actualisation* (*ibid.*, p. 347). Senge argues that an over-emphasis on specific organisational goals and objectives can leave insufficient space for defining and achieving personal goals, resulting in disenfranchisement and lack of commitment. He further offers a model comprising five ‘disciplines’ that he considers essential to the integrity of the concept of a ‘learning organisation’. These are described briefly below:

Personal mastery is the discipline of personal growth and learning. Developing personal mastery involves both continually clarifying what is important to us

and continually learning how to see current reality more clearly. The juxtaposition of these two areas of attention produces 'creative tension', the dynamic through which we authentically commit ourselves to action. Senge acknowledges that an organisational commitment to personal mastery would be naïve if leaders lacked the capability to build shared vision and shared mental models (discussed below). With regard to the management of change, he considers that people do not resist change; they resist being changed. The development of personal mastery throughout an organisation is a strategy to promote a change-oriented ethos. Senge stresses that developing personal mastery is always an individual's choice and suggests that the key task for a leader is to commit to the discipline and act as a role model.

Senge believes that strategies are often not implemented successfully because the *mental models* of the people charged with implementation do not accommodate or correlate with the intended actions. Our existing, often unconscious, images of the world constrain our thoughts and actions. He argues that these 'mental models' need to be surfaced, tested and improved. However, this is a challenging discipline as we each possess 'defensive routines' that have been built in order to protect ourselves from the pain and threat posed by learning situations. Chris Argyris (1984) describes this condition as 'skilled incompetence'. Mental models are sets of assumptions, rather than objective facts. Where, in an organisation, colleagues reflect on their mental models and work on the basis that others are working from their own mental models, the potential for experimentation and divergent thinking is enhanced. Senge (*op. cit.*) argues that, in order to promote learning and hence build a learning organisation, managers need to develop the skill of inquiring into colleagues' thinking, helping them to develop their 'theories-in-use'. The approach is described as 'ruthlessly compassionate'.

Senge conceptualises *shared visions* as responses to the question 'What do we want to create?'. He argues that they create a sense of commonality throughout

an institution that adds coherence to the diversity of activities that occur. He further stresses that shared visions emerge from personal visions:

Today, 'vision' is a familiar concept in corporate leadership. But when you look carefully you find that most 'visions' are one person's (or one group's vision) imposed on an organisation. Such visions, at best, command compliance - not commitment. A shared vision is a vision that many people are truly committed to, because it reflects their own personal vision.

(*ibid.*, p. 206)

Barth (1990a, p. 516) concurs, arguing that 'implementing the ideas and ideals of others will always be a half-hearted enterprise'. The art of visionary leadership, from this perspective, is for leaders to share their sense of vision in such a way that they encourage colleagues to develop their own visions. Senge insists that any notion that shared visions can be created through a strategic planning process or announced from 'on high' is misguided. The process is ongoing: the development and nurturing of the organisation's 'governing principles' (vision, purposes and core values). By continually sharing their personal visions and asking 'Will you follow me?' leaders lay the foundations for commitment to a shared vision. Multiple visions can co-exist, but the role of the leader is to find the unifying features of the individual visions, forcefully articulating what the organisation is trying to say. Senge uses a hologram as a metaphor for the relationship between individual and shared visions, explaining that when a hologram is cut into pieces each piece provides a representation of the whole. Importantly, the pieces are not identical, representing the image from different points of view. Along similar lines, and in an educational context, Stoll and Fink (1996) advocate 'invitational leadership' as the appropriate style for tomorrow's schools, where leadership is about 'communicating invitations to individuals and groups with whom leaders

interact in order to build and act on a shared and evolving vision of enhanced educational experiences for pupils' (*ibid.*, p. 209). To invite others, 'leaders must first invite themselves, physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually'. (*ibid.*, p. 111).

Senge (*op cit.*) argues that although individuals learn all the time, there is often little 'organisational learning'. However, teams can act as microcosms of learning that can propagate the development of new skills and understanding more widely in the organisation. *Team learning* has three critical dimensions:

- the need to think insightfully about complex issues;
- the need for innovative, co-ordinated action;
- the role of team members on other teams.

He further distinguishes between discussion, which is designed to *converge* towards decisions, and dialogue, which explores complex issues *divergently*. For team learning to take place, dialogue is needed and this should be grounded in the skills of reflection and inquiry. For real learning to take place within the team, team members need to be encouraged (often by a facilitator) to raise the most difficult, subtle and conflictual issues essential to the team's work. Furthermore, it is also important for the processes of dialogue and discussion to be monitored by the participants and for defensive routines to be exposed in a spirit of mutual support and trust. In this paradigm, as in any other, a school's senior management team will have a high degree of influence on the formation and implementation of strategy. Interestingly, research by Wallace and Hall (1994) shows that the cohesiveness that is typical between members of the senior team in schools can lead to a schism between the team and other colleagues.

Systems thinking, the fifth discipline in his model for building a learning organisation, is an intuitive conceptual framework to help us to see the

structures underlying complex events. The essence of the discipline lies in a shift of mind:

- seeing interrelationships, rather than linear cause-effect chains; and
- seeing processes of change, rather than snapshots.

Senge (*op cit.*) argues that systems thinking 'builds to learning' through the recognition of 'structures' that recur again and again. Ultimately, life is simplified as interrelationships between events and patterns of change are more readily detected. Usefully, Senge discriminates between two types of complexity: *detail complexity* and *dynamic complexity*. He argues that strategic planning fails to produce breakthroughs in management effectiveness because, by its nature, it is concerned with detail complexity, i.e. the co-ordination of a large number of variables. Dynamic complexity is where causes and effects are subtle and interventions produce different effects over time and in different places in an organisation. For Senge, the real issue in management situations lies in understanding dynamic complexity, not detail complexity. Senge outlines eleven 'laws' and ten 'archetypes', which he considers fundamental to a systems perspective. The bottom line of systems thinking, though, is the 'principle of leverage', i.e. knowing where in a system actions and changes can lead to improvements. He argues that small, well-focussed efforts are often more effective than large-scale ones.

Our nonsystemic ways are so damaging specifically because they consistently lead us to focus on low-leverage changes: we focus on symptoms where the stress is greatest. We repair or ameliorate the symptoms. But such efforts only make matters better in the short run, at best, and worse in the long run.

(*ibid.*, p. 114)

Systems thinking, according to Senge, results in a structural understanding of situations on a more fundamental, rather than symptomatic, basis that provides the foundation for a more enduring improvement in the way that things are done. Romme and Witteloostuijn (1999) refer to this type of sustainable learning ability as *triple loop learning*. Single loop learning occurs when simple corrective action 'permits the organisation to carry on its present policies or to achieve its present objectives' (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. 2). In contrast, double loop learning is the process whereby new policies and objectives are developed in order to reframe a problem in order to find more creative solutions (Snell & Man-Kuen Chak, 1988). Triple loop learning is a meta-process that concerns structures and strategies for learning.

Triple loop learning manifests itself in the form of 'collective mindfulness': members discover how they and their predecessors have facilitated or inhibited learning, and produce new structures and strategies for learning.

(Romme & van Witteloostuijn, *op. cit.*, p. 440)

Mintzberg *et al.* (1998, pp. 214-215) consider that the 'learning organisation' is a difficult ideal to sustain in practice but that the effort could well be worthwhile:

...the improved capabilities conferred by such organisational learning ... also increase the ability of the organisation to take advantage of rapidly changing external conditions. Their strategies are sufficiently open-ended to allow for the unexpected, so that their capabilities of organisational learning can deal with rapidly changing environments.

- ˆ They further provide a critique of the learning school of strategy formation. In their view, there are three potential difficulties with this approach – *no strategy*, *wrong strategy* and *lost strategy*. These are examined in turn:

The learning school, encouraging initiative and experimentation, can be criticised for advocating a lack of coherence across the organisation (no strategy). However, a blanket criticism of this nature does not reflect the sophistication of the approach, when it is managed well. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, e.g. in a crisis, patient organisational learning may not be an option: forceful, incisive, ‘top-down’ leadership may be necessary. Furthermore, depending on the nature of the business, the coherence of a centralised approach to strategy may be more prudent, e.g. in a nuclear power station.

Through their *lost strategy* argument, they consider that constant change, as a concept, is flawed. Change, they argue, needs to be balanced with continuity;

The tricky part concerns learning at the edge of that strategic umbrella: when to cut off initiatives that venture beyond the umbrella as opposed to when to enlarge the umbrella to recognise their benefits. Managers cannot be constantly doing the latter – enlarging the organisation’s strategic perspective – but neither can they fix it so that it can never be allowed to change.

(*ibid.*, p. 227)

Without this skilful handling of the umbrella, i.e. not opening it too wide, too quickly, viable strategies could get ‘lost’ in the proliferation of new, untested ideas and perspectives.

A further potential difficulty is that the emphasis on individual learning (a prerequisite for organisational learning, in this approach) could lay the ground for a proliferation of novel, uncoordinated strategies that do not reflect the needs of the organisation (*wrong strategy*). The organisation could be lured, one step at a time, into an undesirable position.

Overall, Mintzberg *et al.* (*ibid.*) consider that the ‘learning school’ brings reality to the study of strategy formation, as it offers revealing insights into what organisations actually do when faced with complex and dynamic conditions. If strategy is conceived as a learning process, then the concept of the ‘learning organisation’ makes a large contribution to the field of strategic management.

In his critique of school improvement strategies, Frost (2000) quotes Angus who argues for ‘transformative leadership’, a ‘learning school’ perspective that recognises the complexity of relationships in school:

Those who hold administrative positions need to realise that their best contribution to educational reform may be to use the authority of their position to facilitate the exercise of agency of those of their staff who, for one reason or another, have begun to examine critically, and engage in dialogue about, educational issues and educational purposes so that they are rendered problematic and subjected to scrutiny.

(Angus, 1993, p. 86)

However, the learning school dismisses deliberate strategy in favour of emergent strategy and Mintzberg *et al.* find it lacking in this respect as ‘...no real world strategy can be purely deliberate or purely emergent, since one precludes learning while the other precludes control’ (*op. cit.*, p. 363).

Having considered competing, or complementary, perspectives on strategy development, the focus of the review next considers the longevity of school strategic plans.

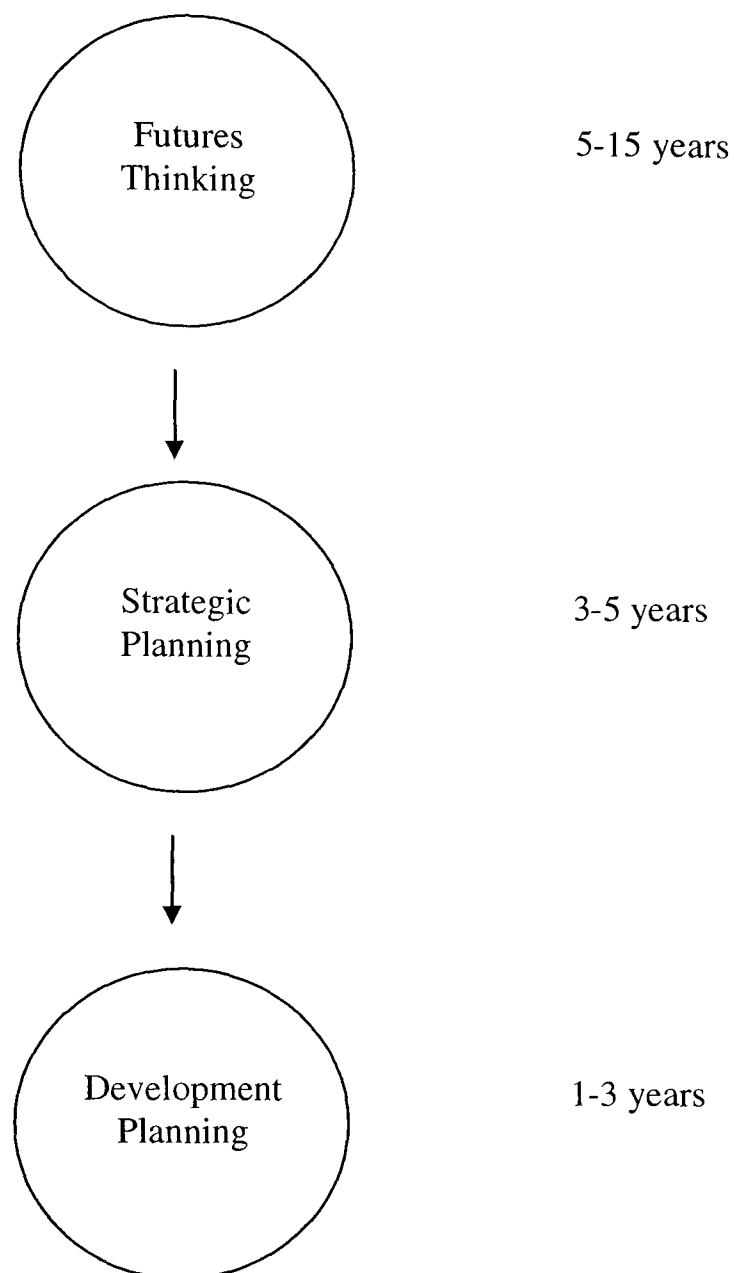
Range of vision: strategic planning, strategic intent and futures thinking

In the context of education, Davies and Ellison (1996) developed a three-stage planning model representing the different natures of shorter and longer term planning. Through their research, Davies and Ellison found that although schools were becoming increasingly competent and confident in operational planning, there was little evidence of longer-term strategic perspectives being employed. This, they argue (*ibid.*, p. 2), is the basis for an agenda for change:

The continued and increasingly rapid changes in both the educational and the global environment require that schools should think ahead about the types of institutions which they wish to be in ten years time.

The three stages of planning are shown in Diagram 2.8:

Diagram 2.8 – Three stages of planning



(Davies & Ellison, 1996, p. 3)

Senior managers are encouraged to lead the school's stakeholders in a collective consideration of what the future will bring ('futures thinking'), through building possible scenarios. The rationale for this approach is that it builds an awareness of the implications that decisions made in the short term could have, as played out through the scenarios constructed.

For Davies and Ellison, strategic planning is an intermediate stage of planning comprising strategic analysis, strategic choice and strategic implementation. Strategic analysis (auditing the school's resource capability and environmental positioning) is a process that would usually be managed by the senior management team (SMT). Critical strategic choices, they argue, would be made by the governing body in consultation with the headteacher or with the senior management team as a whole. Strategic implementation links the strategic planning process into operational development planning.

In their research involving forty secondary schools, they found (in their terms) an almost total absence of strategic planning over a three to five year time-scale:

In most schools it was evident that reactive and incremental thinking predominated with schools making standardised comments about the difficulty of planning outside the annual budgeting cycle.

(ibid., p. 8)

By 1998, Davies and Ellison had refined their three-stage model to reflect the difficulties that senior managers were having with the longer-term strategic planning process:

In the educational context, rapid change over the last ten years and the future impact of technology on learning have cast doubt as to whether strategic planning over a three- to five- year period is possible for all of a school's activities.

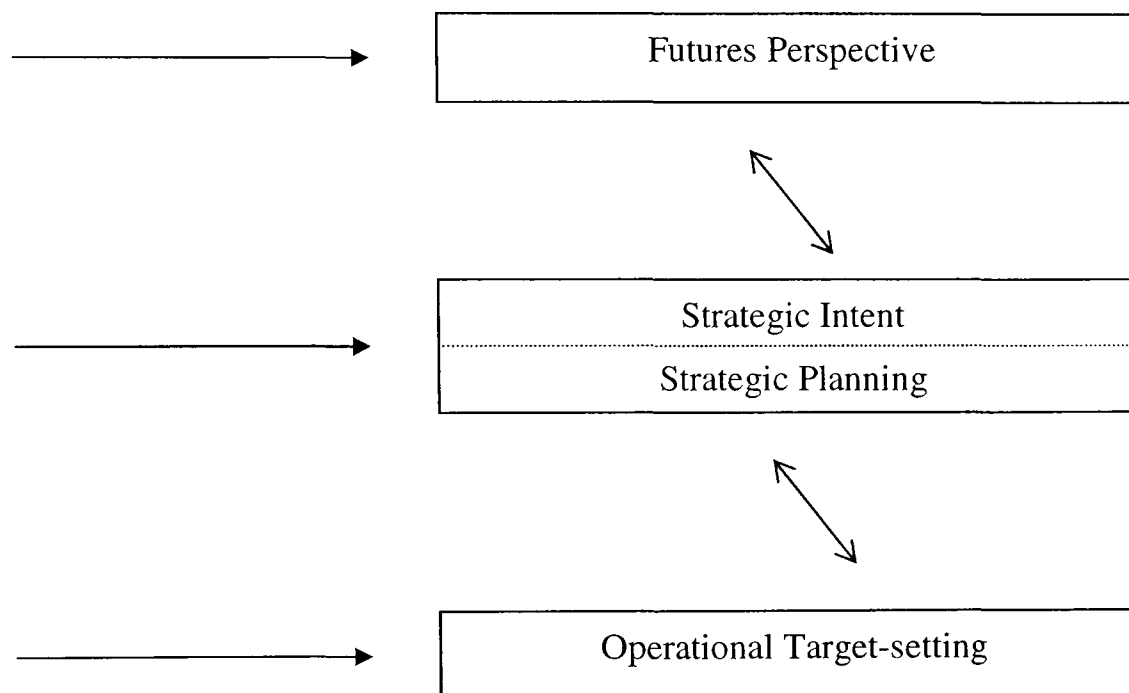
(1999, p. 15)

The distinctive feature of the new model that emerged from this reappraisal of their work, was the inclusion of *strategic intent*, a more pragmatic approach than strategic planning that ‘binds the staff together in the furtherance of key priorities’ (*ibid.*, p. 16) without the detail of strategic planning, which could quickly become compromised by the prevailing circumstances in a rapidly changing environment. Davies and Ellison draw on the ideas of Hamel and Prahalad (1989, p. 63) who define strategic intent as:

- stable over time;
- consistent in its relationship to short-term action, while leaving room for re-interpretation as new opportunities emerge; and
- by its nature, deserving of personal effort and commitment.

Davies and Ellison retain the central principles of their three-stage model. However, strategic intent is incorporated as an alternative to strategic planning, the former being recommended for the less predictable areas of medium-term planning with the latter being reserved for the definable and predictable areas. Their refined model is shown below (Diagram 2.2):

Diagram 2.2 – Davies and Ellison’s three-stage model of strategy development



(Davies & Ellison, 1999, p. 18)

Given the broad criticisms of strategic planning, strategic intent may be a more feasible concept to guide organisational growth over the medium term. The ‘operational target-setting’ phase of Davies and Ellison’s model broadly correlates to the school development planning process through which annual targets are set and action plans are constructed, implemented and evaluated. This process is the focus for the second area of the research study and the relevant literature is reviewed in the following section.

The school development plan: its role in the development and implementation of strategy

School development planning

‘School development planning’ was introduced into schools by David Hargreaves and David Hopkins, through the widespread circulation of their pamphlet ‘Planning for School Development’ (DES, 1989). The authors considered that development planning offered a means to empower a school to find an appropriate balance in managing the discontinuities and exploiting the opportunities that arise as external initiatives and influences occur. They stressed that the approach was flexible. The ultimate purpose of development planning was to ‘improve the quality of teaching and learning in a school through the successful management of innovation and change’ (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991).

The distinctive feature of a school development plan is that it brings together, *in an overall plan*, national and LEA policies and initiatives, the school’s aims and values, its existing achievements and its needs for development.

(*ibid.*, p. 3)

The authors describe how a development plan sets overall school priorities for the next year, with detail provided by supporting action plans. Longer-term priorities (three to five years recommended) are also sketched out in brief detail to reflect the greater uncertainty as the time period is extended. The development planning approach includes:

- carrying out an audit of a range of school functions;
- determining priorities for development;
- constructing and agreeing on a plan;
- drawing up action plans, targets, tasks and success criteria;
- implementing the plan;
- checking the process of implementation; and
- checking the success of implementation.

Since its inception, the national inspection framework has focused upon the school development plan as a focus for its judgements on the management and leadership of schools (Ofsted, 1992, 1995). Headteachers and governing bodies have, therefore, had little option other than to incorporate school development planning into their management practice (Bennett *et al.*, 2000). However, this model presents a number of challenges including the resolution of the tension between maintenance and development, a centrally important issue for school leaders (Day *et al.*, 1999).

Maintenance vs. development

Perhaps the most crucial challenge facing schools today is how to balance change with stability effectively; on the one hand, how to preserve what is already admirable and fine in a school and, on the other, how to respond positively to innovation and the challenge of change.

(Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1994, p. 20)

This tension has structural implications for development plans. On the premise that balance is needed, should plans be constructed to discriminate between priorities and action that are essentially ‘maintenance’ and those that are essentially ‘developmental’ or, as the name suggests, should development

planning focus squarely on the developmental priorities to the exclusion of the more familiar maintenance tasks? The predisposition, perhaps, for advocates of the 'planning school', is to push *new* initiatives into one area of this dichotomy and all other potential management activity into the other. The choice, perhaps, between competing priorities is better described as a strategic selection between new initiatives with anticipated benefits and areas that could advantageously be improved. The caveat then is simply not to choose too many priority areas. However, a structural distinction (as a design feature) between 'development' and 'maintenance' may in fact lead to a greater focus on introducing new initiatives than on improving existing structures and capabilities, a consequence that could ultimately lead to a diminution of quality and a dissipation of efforts. True 'maintenance' activities are the content of operational plans that need bear no relation to an organisation's overall strategy and need not, therefore, feature in a school development plan. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991, p.42) suggest that there are two principles that should guide the choice between competing priorities:

- *manageability*, i.e. how much can reasonably be achieved; and
- *coherence*, i.e. the extent to which it is possible to design a sequence of activities to aid implementation.

A third principle, *consonance*, has been suggested (Hopkins *et al.*, 1994). This is the extent to which an option coincides with, or is potentially consistent with, an external reform. During a period of substantial governmental direction and pressure, there is evidence to suggest that schools who understand this principle are more effective in their school improvement strategies. The role of school development planning within the broader area of strategic management is considered further in the next section.

Development planning and its relationship to strategy

...change is a relatively long-term process, which cannot be done quickly or easily, and ... a carefully formulated step-by-step approach is to be preferred.

(Hargreaves *et al.*, 1989, pp. 106):

Development planning seems to reside in the overlap between the 'planning school' and the 'logical incremental school'. There is a recognition of the need to proceed with caution, in small steps (i.e. logical incremental) but, given that detailed plans span a year and intentions are mapped out for three to five years, this suggests that the premises of the strategic planners are built in to the model. How the tension between deliberate and emergent strategy is managed in practice is unclear. There seem to be just two possible explanations, either:

- the strategy is sustainable without adjustment, in detail, over a year and is broadly sustainable over three to five years (from this it could be inferred that the environment and strategic capability of the school are substantially static over these periods); or
- the plan exists as a broad statement of intent but, in practice, the strategic direction of the school is, at best, only broadly approximate to the content of the plan, as intended strategy is interpreted, through implementation, into deliberate strategy and emergent strategy arrives unannounced.

Given either of these explanations, the key question to consider is how the form and function of such a plan affects the conception that stakeholders in the school have regarding the school's vision, purposes and priorities. On the basis of the first explanation, the school is a long way from Senge's 'learning organisation', as the school's vision is effectively static for three to five years. The second explanation acknowledges the complexity and instability of the

environment and the potential for priorities to shift as an organisation changes and grows in its cultural profile. However, from this explanation the plan, by design, seems to attempt to hide the reality of strategic development and implementation. From the perspective of a classroom teacher, or indeed a member of support staff, the mismatch between the plan and subsequent actions may be apparent without any adequate explanation of the consequences of a change in strategic direction. In research conducted by Wallace (1994) and Braithwaite (1994), headteachers were found to adjust their development plans as they went along. The following issues, therefore, remain significant:

- the substantive basis for the changes and the breadth of involvement in monitoring and evaluating that precipitated these adjustments;
- the extent to which changes were made for reasons of accountability (e.g. in anticipation of inspection of the match between plan and action by Ofsted), rather than to support strategic re-orientation per se;
- whether, or not, these changes were communicated to stakeholders (and if so, how).

Morgan (1993, p. 47) writes assertively about this syndrome, arguing for a style of leadership that is not constrained by plans, and moves forward towards a final vision, but without a clear picture of the stages to get there. Weindling (1989, p. 57) is in broad agreement:

It is better to do a small amount of pre-implementation planning and a large amount of implementation planning/support rather than vice-versa.

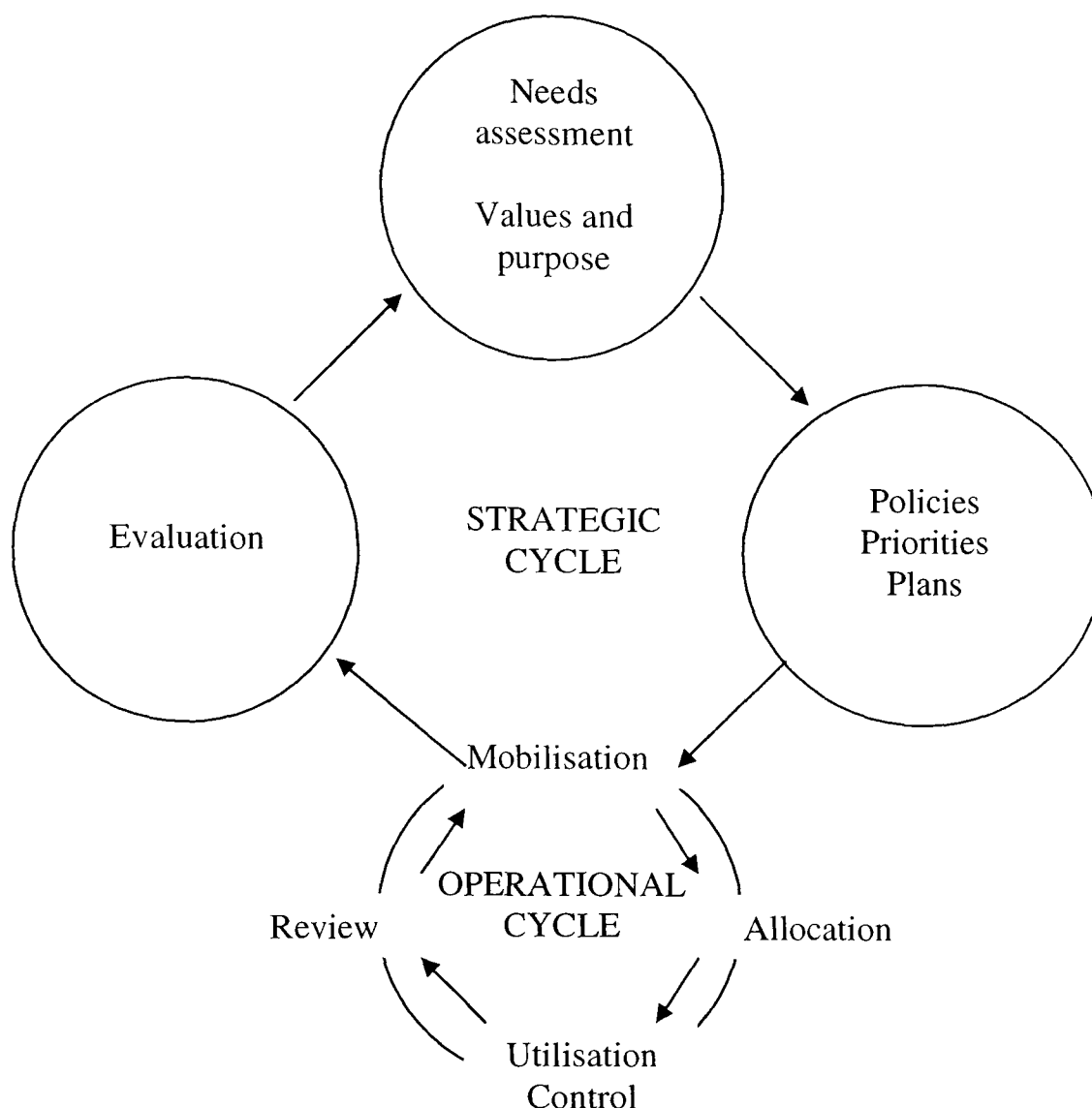
Scheerens (1997) labels this approach *retroactive*, in contrast to the less flexible, more purposive *synoptic* variation of planning. He stresses the importance, within the retroactive model, of an organisational vision, or set of core goals, to guide incremental adjustments to emergent strategy. Resource

management needs to be highly flexible to support a retroactive approach to strategic planning. The allocation of resources is considered in the next section.

Resource allocation

Resource allocation (in the context of school development planning) is an aspect of strategic resource management, a process that is most commonly described in terms of the *rational* perspective (e.g. Ofsted 1995; National Audit Office, 1994; Audit Commission, 1993). This perspective emphasises the need for clear structures and procedures and also the importance of matching resources to strategic priorities. It can be represented by the *resource management cycle* (Simkins, 1998, p. 67), shown below as Diagram 2.3:

Diagram 2.3 – The resource management cycle



Viewed through the lens of the rational perspective, the *operational cycle* must operate within the context of the *strategic cycle*. The organisation's values and key purposes are translated into policies and plans which inform the operational cycle, wherein resources are mobilised, allocated, utilised and their use reviewed. This is followed by an evaluation of the impact of these resources on the organisation's performance, with regard to the targets set in the strategic plan. However, through their research on a sample of seventeen schools in the north-west of England (from both the secondary and primary sectors), Edwards *et al.* (2000) found budgetary expenditure to be only loosely coupled to strategic objectives. They attributed this, in part, to the difficulties

that school leaders had in costing the actions required to implement curriculum-based initiatives. Such uncertainty led to judgemental and political means of management control. Also, the lack of time between the receipt of final resource allocations from the LEA and the beginning of the financial year allowed little time for the deliberation of resource allocation; this undermines the role of the budget in co-ordinating strategy. The imperative of closely defined *rational* resource management arising from the context of accountability may, therefore, be a powerful influence but there are practical difficulties. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that research by Glover *et al.* (1996) has demonstrated that rational planning does not necessarily result in improved educational outcomes.

Simkins (1989) also highlights the cultural and political dimensions of resource allocation. The process and outcome of fund distribution demonstrates what is valued in an organisation and also how power is exercised to further the interests of individuals. Simkins (1998) further identifies pressures and dilemmas for both senior managers and middle managers in the process of resource allocation. Senior managers feel the pressure of accountability in the management of finances as colleagues at lower positions in the management hierarchy may feel that it is appropriate for them to make difficult decisions, as a function of their responsibility, without having any of the potential blame attached to them. Senior managers are likely also to understand that there is leverage in resource allocation to change the behaviour of staff in unobtrusive ways by allocating and withholding funds.

As more rational systems of strategic planning and resource allocation have been introduced (through local management of schools (LMS)), the role of the middle manager has also changed. Levacic (1995) reports an increase in bidding systems associated with department development plans; this suggests greater middle management responsibility and accountability for the management of resources in the context of a greater centralisation of power

over strategic choice. However, Edwards *et al.* (*op cit.*) highlight the small proportion of the budget that is typically devolved in this way, arguing that this makes the link between the budget and the strategic objectives a tenuous one, with minimal collegial involvement. Simkins (*op. cit.*) notes that bidding mechanisms run contrary to the ‘loose coupling’ that has traditionally been characteristic of educational organisations, with resource allocation more typically comprehensively distributed by formula allocation. Under formula allocation of funds, the decision-makers are distanced from the actions by a ‘ladder of objectivity’ (Simkins, 1989, p. 169). The further up the ladder (i.e. away from the activities to be funded) one climbs, the greater need there is to act ‘objectively’ (i.e. in a way that seems to be fair to those with competing claims). The benefits of a more strategic approach may need to be offset against the pressures and moral dilemmas of an increasingly ‘managerialist’ agenda (Newman & Clarke, 1994; Elliott & Crossley, 1997; Simkins, 1997). Indeed, in the context of such concerns over managerialism, the issues of involvement and ownership are also centrally important and these are examined further in the next section.

Involvement in development planning

Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) argue that the *process* of development planning is important, stressing the need for a collegial approach to its development involving the wider team of staff and governors. In this way, development planning can contribute to the creation of a more cohesive school culture (Cuckle *et al.*, 1998). In development planning, every teacher is a manager. In this sense, it is different to the formal, traditional planning (or design) school of strategy formation, where strategy is conceived and imposed from the top.

...development planning requires a holistic approach to the school, one that is undermined by the division between managers and teachers.

(Hargreaves & Hopkins, *op cit.*, p. 15)

The degree of involvement in development planning generally varies according to the responsibilities held by staff (Skelton *et al.*, 1991). Schools, of course, have non-teaching staff in a variety of essential roles. It is perhaps unhelpful that the role of support staff in development planning is not considered by its originators, as school leaders may, unwittingly, have excluded a number of their colleagues from participation in this process. It certainly seems a surprising omission given the authors' proclamation that development planning focuses on 'the school's culture, management and organisation as a whole' (Hargreaves & Hopkins, *op cit.*, p. 9). The role of non-teaching staff in the process is recognised in later publications (e.g. MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1995a; Rogers, 1994). However, there is recent evidence to suggest that practice remains exclusive in this regard (Cuckle *et al.*, *op cit.*).

What should be the role of the governing body in drawing up the school development plan? The development plan should, in fact, be the governing body's plan (DfEE, 1994). Martin and Bullock (1997, p. 3) suggest that there are two main reasons why, despite this legal position, governing bodies are typically on the margins of the development planning process. Firstly, the majority of governors are not sufficiently experienced as managers to act as 'knowledgeable partners'. Surveys of governors about their involvement show an acknowledgement of their lack of expertise. Secondly, headteachers are often unsure of how and where to involve the governing body in the development planning process. Fundamentally, in order to make a worthwhile contribution, governors need to be informed: to learn about the school and the environment in which it operates. Research by Cuckle *et al.* (*op cit.*) found considerable variation in governors' knowledge and involvement in

development planning both *within* the schools in their study and *across* the sample of schools.

Rogers (*op cit.*) argues for extended participation in the development planning process over the whole community of staff, governors, students and parents. Martin and Bullock (*op. cit.*) and MacGilchrist *et al* (1994) also argue that effective development planning requires the accommodation of different 'voices'. These voices need to be articulated at an appropriate stage in the school development planning cycle. Governors, in particular, often find themselves 'rubber-stamping' the school development plan as their involvement comes too late to influence its content.

The focus of the next section is the relationship between school development planning and the core business of the school: teaching and learning.

Development planning for pupil achievement

Since the mid-1990s there has been a growing trend in the use of development planning as a direct strategy to influence classroom practice (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1995b; Hopkins & MacGilchrist, 1998). This contrasts with the original conception of development planning as a change management tool to cope with the introduction of external initiatives and the development and implementation of school-wide policies that may concern issues that do not impact directly on classroom practice.

Hopkins and MacGilchrist (*ibid.*, pp. 412-414) found that there were six key messages for managers in schools aiming to raise student achievement through development planning, namely:

1. Keep the focus on student learning:

A focus on academic outcomes is not, in itself, enough to raise standards; targets set should relate to improvements in pupils' learning skills.

2. Clarify the link between effective teaching and student learning outcomes:

There should be an on-going reappraisal of the range of factors that characterise teacher effectiveness, i.e. the skills that teachers can develop that lead to better learning experiences and pupil outcomes.

3. Ensure consistency across the school:

In highly effective schools, values and expectations are firmly established and pupils feel secure in their learning as they move from one classroom to another (Mortimore *et al.*, 1988).

4. Ensure that development planning is based on evidence:

Development planning should be informed by a process of self-evaluation that draws on a variety of evidential bases. The implementation of action plans should then be monitored regularly; monitoring is assisted by careful selection of well-focussed success criteria.

5. Ensure that the school's management supports the plan and keep a focus on student learning:

Management activity should be substantially directed at the developments related to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Moves towards flatter management structures are consistent with a participative approach that involves a greater number of staff in decision making and development activities (Hopkins *et al.*, 1996).

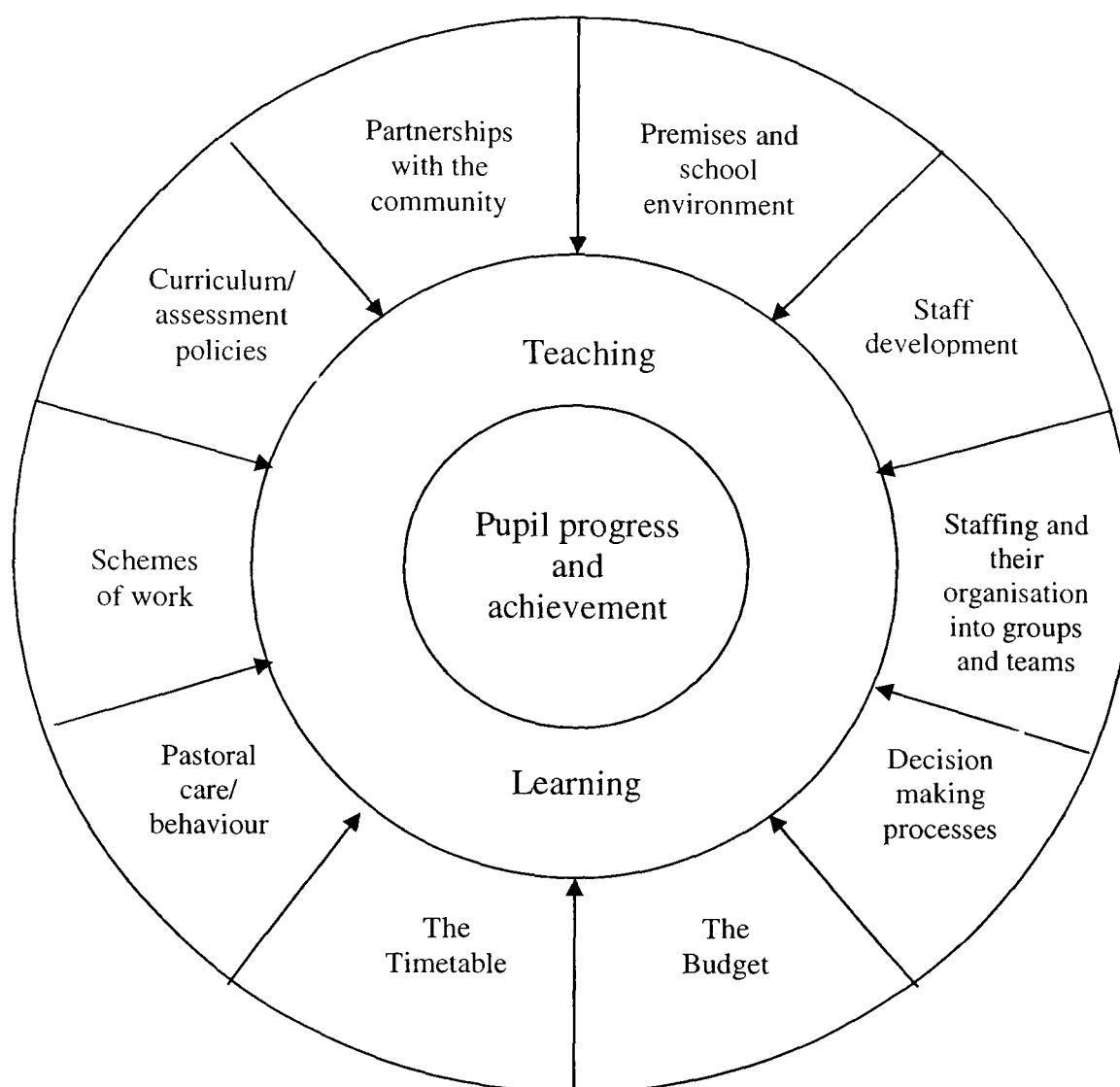
6. Employ differential school improvement strategies:

Qualitatively different strategies are needed depending on a school's performance profile (Hopkins *et al.*, 1997). Three strategies are outlined, to

cover the broad range of circumstances. Type I strategies, for low performing schools, focus on a limited number of achievable pupil learning objectives and draw on a high degree of external support to manage change, as such schools have difficulty improving themselves. Type II strategies help to improve the effectiveness of moderately performing schools, with or without external support. They involve a focus on specific teaching and learning issues, together with a reappraisal of organisational design. Type III strategies are designed to help highly effective schools to remain so. In this situation, schools need to remain open to new ideas. Typically, such schools are involved in a variety of consortium arrangements and professional networks. Hopkins (2000) argues that UK policy prescriptions have been generally insensitive to the context in which school improvement efforts are located.

Hopkins and MacGilchrist (*op cit.*, pp. 414-5) suggest that development planning will aid sustained improvement in pupil progress and achievement only when proper attention is paid both to teaching strategies and management arrangements. The challenge for schools is to support improvements in pupil achievement through a focus on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom which, in turn, is supported by appropriate management arrangements and practices. Diagram 2.4 illustrates this critical interface between classroom practice (middle section) and management processes (outer section), with pupil achievement at the heart of whole-school development.

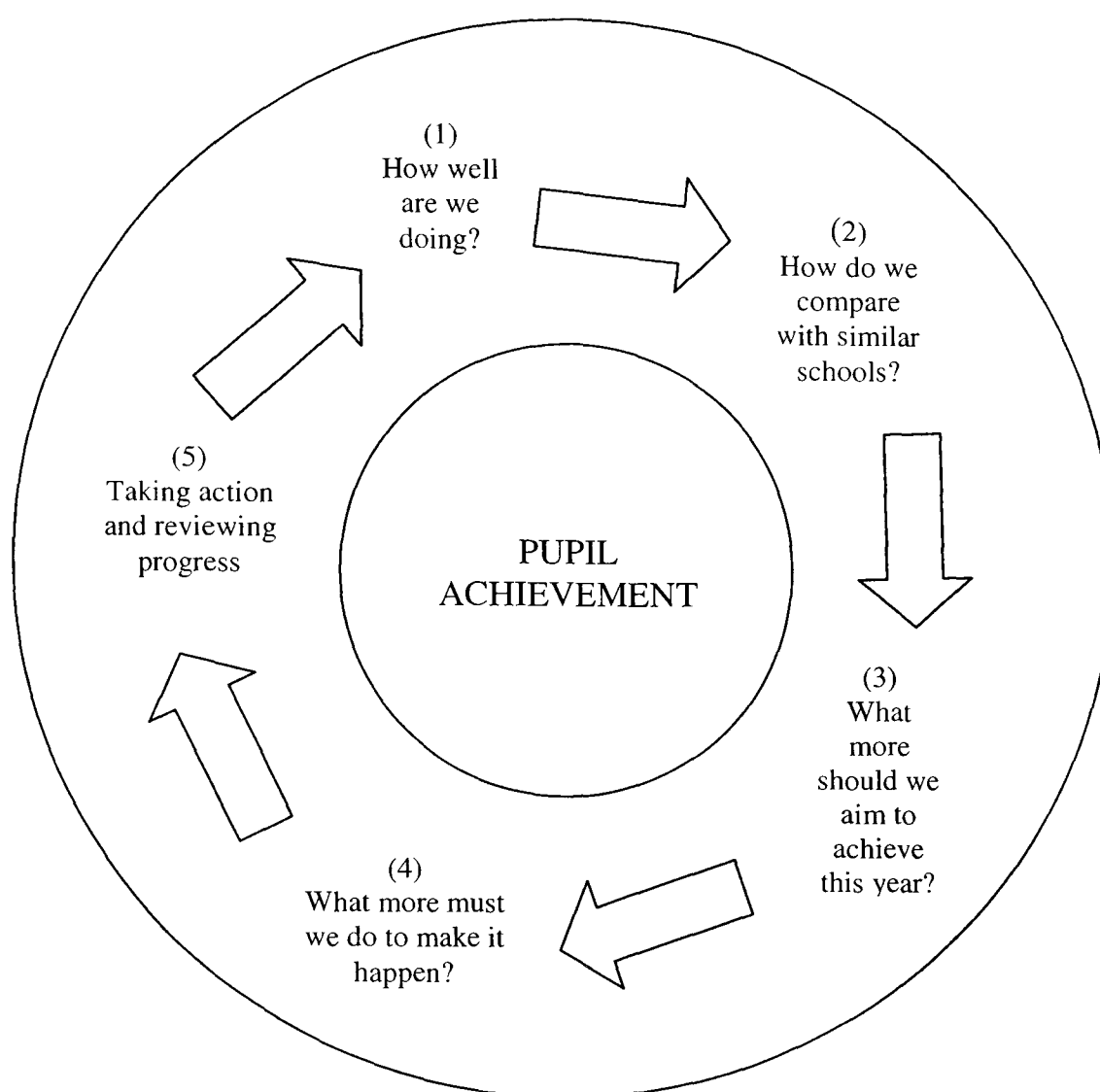
Diagram 2.4 – The interface between whole-school development and classroom practice



(Hopkins & MacGilchrist (1998, pp. 415)

Hopkins and MacGilchrist (*op. cit.*) further recommend the five-stage cycle of school self-improvement (DfEE, 1997; DfEE/Ofsted, 1995) as a model to frame the development planning process. This cycle is summarised below in Diagram 2.5:

Diagram 2.5 – The five-stage cycle of school self-improvement



(DfEE, 1997, p. 8)

Stages 1 and 2 comprise the audit phase of the planning cycle. This is a (limited) type of strategic analysis. For stage 1, data describing student achievement are analysed and attainment is compared with baseline assessment data to generate measures of progress. Further data relating to attendance, pupil behaviour and other quantifiable evidence are supplemented with more qualitative evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning.

Stage 2 is predicated on the principle of benchmarking. Hopkins and MacGilchrist (*op cit.*) argue that by comparing its performance with that of other 'like' schools, a school is better equipped to assess its strengths and areas for improvement. They are prudent enough to suggest that such comparisons need to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, their support for the principle of benchmarking is clear. It is my contention that the inclusion of Stage 2 in the cycle (above) is misguided. Performance and Assessment (PANDA) reports have been provided by the DfES as the national benchmarking model for use in schools. This model (a grouping of similar schools based on the entitlement of pupils for free school meals) has been much criticised on the grounds of validity and basic statistical robustness.

Schools with similar proportions of pupils receiving free school meals do not necessarily have similar intakes, or even broadly similar intakes

(Plewis & Goldstein, 1997)

However, more fundamentally, perhaps, from the perspective of strategic management, this legacy of the school effectiveness movement does not satisfactorily embrace the complexity of the management of change. Benchmarking is a technique that is consistent with a change management strategy of focused re-engineering (see Strebel, 1994). Where change forces are difficult to identify and there is substantial internal resistance to change, benchmarking is a useful method for confronting colleagues with the need for a radical re-examination of their practice in order to catalyse a paradigm shift. However, arguably, the use of benchmarking as presented in Ofsted's PANDA reports (DfES, 2001b), is not always appropriate or advisable for the context. Ball (1990, p.162) considers that school effectiveness research 'provides a technology for the possibility of blaming the school' and benchmarking would seem to support his argument well. There is no central prescription over how PANDA reports should be used by staff and governors, though there is a clear

expectation that the report should inform school self-evaluation in some way. The use of PANDA reports in external inspection by Ofsted (DfES, *op cit.*) places concern over their validity and appropriateness of use into sharp relief and creates anxiety amongst school managers over how their practice of school self-evaluation might be judged.

Stage 3 concerns target setting, an integral part of the development planning process.

Target setting raises expectations, directs efforts and demands the planned use of resources.

(Hopkins & MacGilchrist, 1998, p. 419)

Hopkins and MacGilchrist (*ibid.*) report that, in addition to the quantitative targets for improvement that, since 1998, schools are now required to set (DfES, 1997a), schools have increasingly begun to set qualitative targets related to students' learning that are sufficiently rigorous to enable their impact to be assessed. However, this is not represented in DfES (1997b) guidance, which asserts that:

Successful schools set targets that are **SMART** (*bold emphasis in the original text*): Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related.

The range of examples that are offered further reinforces the bias for quantitative targets. Coleman and Collinge (1991, p. 263) quote Sirotnick (1987, p. 47) in arguing soberly that:

Achievement scores may provide useful descriptive data but they have no 'supreme status against which the relevance of all other information is judged'.

Stage 4 of the cycle concerns strategy development. A plan for action is built around the targets that have been set. It is recommended that the school development plan includes the school's aims, its broad priorities for the next 3-5 years, a review of the previous year's plan, specific priorities for the coming year and a costed action plan (or set of plans) for the coming year.

Finally, stage 5 incorporates strategy implementation and evaluation. Hopkins and MacGilchrist (*op cit*) stress the importance of managing the process to sustain momentum, together with the need for regular monitoring and, where appropriate, adjustments to targets set. They also report that the evaluation of a plan's impact is often insufficiently systematic to provide a sound basis for the next year's plan.

Research by Newmann *et al.* (2000) provides a framework for understanding continuous school improvement that focuses on student achievement. In short, they conclude that the critical factor is school capacity – the collective competency of the school to bring about effective change. This capacity is supported by the 'social capital' of professional learning communities, where relationships between colleagues are continually developing. Furthermore, the most effective schools selectively introduce, adapt and co-ordinate innovations into coherent strategies. They are aware of the dangers of innovation overload and they attack incoherence (Fullan, 2000a). Finally, due attention is paid to the quality and economy of technical resources (e.g. classroom equipment, ICT infrastructure) that are needed for the successful implementation of new approaches. The concept of *capacity* is developed further in the final section of this chapter.

The next section of the review focuses on organisational culture and structure and the importance that these characteristics can hold for a school's ability to envision its own future.

Culture, organisational structure and the capacity for change

Culture

Deal and Peterson (1990, p. 7) define organisational culture as

... the stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behaviour over time.

However, the intangibility of culture makes it difficult to arrive at a consensus on its meaning and there are variations to this broadly accepted definition.

Schein (1985, p. 9), for example, highlights the role that culture plays in integrating a given social group, with the attendant difficulties of exclusivity for new group members:

(Culture is)... a pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

Drennan (1992, p. 3) provides a widely used and more action-orientated interpretation of the concept:

Culture is 'how things are done around here'. It is what is typical of the organisation, the habits, the prevailing attitudes, the grown-up pattern of accepted and expected behaviour.

Denison (1990, p. 2) integrates these abstract and concrete interpretations to provided the following definition:

... the underlying values, beliefs and principles that serve as a foundation for an organisation's management system as well as the set of management practices and behaviours that both exemplify and reinforce those basic principles.

This seems to reflect a more formal, systemic way of thinking. It contrasts with Schein's definition, which centres around the agency of the individuals involved and the interplay of their ideas and values within the context of social structures that exert influence as a function of their own inherited meaning. For Schein, an organisation's culture is its defining character. Traditions and stories of symbolic significance often describe this character more powerfully than more rational analysis.

To add to the complexity, 'culture' is often used interchangeably with 'climate'. However, Hoyle (1986) argues that culture centres around the concept of 'values', whereas climate is primarily concerned with the quality of relationships. Furthermore, the term 'ethos' is also confused with 'culture'. A commonly accepted distinction is that ethos is the public, outward expression of organisational culture (e.g. Hodgkinson, 1983; Dalin *et al.*, 1993). Also, organisations commonly have a variety of sub-cultures, reflecting cultural differences between various groups of people. The more differentiated the culture is the more difficult it is likely to be to manage the organisation (McMahon, 2001).

Cultural patterns have a powerful impact on all aspects of an organisation's performance (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Indeed, Schein (*op cit.*, p. 2) considers that:

... there is a possibility underemphasised in leadership research, that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture.

In their influential work 'In Search of Excellence', Peters and Waterman (1982) concur with Schein and identify a strong, defining culture as a characteristic of their best-performing companies.

The importance of understanding culture has gained increasing recognition in the school improvement literature (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Siskin, 1994; Hargreaves, 1995; Harris, 2001; McMahon, 2001). Hargreaves (*op cit.*), in particular, recognises the contribution that an understanding of an organisation's culture can have in a problem-solving capacity:

By examining the reality-defining aspects of culture, it should be possible to detect the fundamental problems of that social institution, to which over time it has developed the routinised solutions that become 'the way we do things round here'.

Cultures that are most supportive of school improvement efforts are collaborative and developmental (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Ainscow *et al.*, 2000; Fullan, M., 2001). However, as Hargreaves (*op cit.*) notes, no school culture can be shown to be more effective than others in having a direct impact on student outcomes. The following section outlines Hargreaves' work in constructing a typology of school cultures, a useful conceptual framework for the analysis of the organisational character of a school.

A typology of school cultures

Hargreaves (1995) draws on work by Bales (1952, 1953, on group dynamics) and Lieberman and Miller (1984, on school culture) to produce a typology of four distinctive school cultures. He conceptualises 'nurturing the culture' as a task involving the simultaneous management of two distinctively different functions: the *instrumental* function and the *expressive* function. The instrumental function serves to keep members on task, whereas the expressive function aims to keep social harmony. Either function can easily disturb the other and incompetent handling of either task achievement or social relationships has clear potential to disrupt the organisation and its effectiveness. His model postulates a typology representing different combinations of *instrumental-social control* and *expressive-social cohesion*. Schools operate in different contexts and have different aims and values. Every school, therefore, has to find its own optimal balance of these functions. The four culture types are labelled: *formal school culture*, *welfarist school culture*, *hothouse school culture* and *survivalist school culture* and these are considered in turn.

A *formal school culture* combines high instrumental-social control with low expressive-social cohesion. It is typified by high pressure on students and an orderly, rigorously scheduled school day. Expectations are high and excellent performance is rewarded but there is little tolerance of failure. Students are typically strongly 'pro-school' or 'anti-school' as a function of their social-emotional isolation from staff. The head is distant, even authoritarian. The 'ethos' is one of 'traditional values'.

The school that combines low instrumental-social control with high expressive-social control has a *welfarist school culture*. In this school, work pressure is low and academic goals are easily neglected and displaced by the goals of social cohesion and the development of life skills. High emphasis is

placed on student development within a nurturing environment. Relations between the headteacher and the staff are held to be democratic.

By combining high instrumental-social control and high expressive-social cohesion, a further type is created: the *hothouse school culture*. In this school, expectations of both work and personal development are high. Students *and* teachers experience anxiety about failing to reach instrumental goals and about limitations on their independence, autonomy and individuality. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed, being experimenters and innovators. Social control is exercised by covert means such as challenge and emotional blackmail and the sense of institutional oppression created can make members feel like 'inmates'.

The final combination, of low instrumental-social control with low expressive-social cohesion, defines the *survivalist school culture*. This is a school that is close to breakdown, with poor social relations. Students are allowed to avoid work by teachers struggling to maintain basic control. Teachers feel isolated and unsupported; they live their lives one day at a time. Delinquency and truancy rates are high, as is staff absenteeism. Morale is low and there is a feeling amongst staff and students of insecurity and hopelessness.

Hargreaves (*ibid.*) argues that, taking into account the school effectiveness literature, the ideal school culture keeps social control and social cohesion in balance. Expectations of work and conduct of both staff and students in such a school are high, but not at the expense of social relationships. Standards are not perceived to be set at unreasonable levels and everyone is supported in striving for them and rewarded for reaching them. In a sense, his typology proposes four ways that school cultures can become ineffective. The effective school is one which 'successfully avoids the dangers of sliding into excessive formalism, welfarism and survivalism' (p. 29); the extreme type of *hothouse*

culture is further described as a ‘total institution’, being highly pressurised and potentially unstable.

However, schools (as with other organisations) comprise a variety of subcultures, so the broad typologies discussed above could mask a complex and differentiated cultural profile. The more differentiated the culture, the more difficult it is likely to be to manage changes (McMahon, 2001).

Some authors (e.g. Kerr & Slocum, 1987; Johnson & Scholes, 1993) have suggested that reward systems are the key to understanding culture and these are considered in the next section.

Rewards and work motivation

The nature of rewards and their linkage to other organisational systems (such as appraisal) can have a very significant effect on the behaviour, and hence performance, of employees. Riches (1994, p. 240) recognizes the need for different strategies to motivate different individuals within an organization. Specifically, Locke and Latham (1990, p. 4), in their ‘high performance cycle’, recognize two types of reward for consideration: contingent rewards (i.e. rewards linked to task performance) and non-contingent rewards (benefits or rewards that are not linked to performance).

Contingent rewards, in a school context, could include formal and informal recognition for a teacher on the basis of her, or his, characteristics and contributions to school life, teaching skills and pupils’ achievements. Recognition could also be given for positive influences on the performance of other teachers. Since September 2000, in England this reward system would also be related to the school’s performance management system and would incorporate performance-related pay.

The new pay and performance management system is designed to ... link increased awards to good performance, and permit the best teachers to progress faster.

(DfES, 2002b)

Non-contingent rewards in a school could include retention payments that are given to colleagues in an area of subject specialism to which it would be difficult to recruit, as an incentive for them to stay at the school

In his two-factor theory, Herzberg (1966a) recognised two ways in which job satisfaction in the workplace could be improved. Firstly, the reward systems can attend to the *motivators*, i.e. factors that positively influence employee satisfaction with their work, e.g. achievement, recognition and the intrinsic value and nature of the work itself. Secondly, an organisation can attend to *hygiene* or *maintenance factors*. These are sources of potential dissatisfaction, e.g. working conditions, relationships between staff, salary. Handy (1993) characterises Herzberg's two-factor theory as providing answers to the questions 'Why work harder?' (motivators) and 'Why work here?' (hygiene factors). Furthermore, he argues that money may seem to be a hygiene factor, but that this is really linked to equity.

The absolute levels of pay are not often an issue but the equitable level, in relation to others, to one's own pay curve, to future expectations and self-concept.

(*ibid.*, p. 52)

Pasmore (1984) argues that job satisfaction (through improved levels of motivation and better conditions of work) does not guarantee improved performance, as task designs typically change and individuals' competences

are not always well suited to these challenges. He concludes that involving employees in decisions about how their work is to be carried out is the best way of creating the conditions needed for employees to achieve success.

The focus of the review turns next to the formal structures of organisational design and the tensions that exist within any design configuration.

Organisational structure

Mintzberg (1979) suggests that organisational structures comprise six basic 'building blocks', as follows:

- *Operating core*, i.e. where the basic work is done;
- *Strategic apex*, i.e. where the general management occurs;
- *Middle line*, i.e. all those managers between the strategic apex and the operating core;
- *Technostructures*, i.e. those who design systems to deliver and control the work of others;
- *Support staff*, i.e. those who support the work of the operating core; and
- *Ideology*, i.e. the organizational paradigm.

This defines the functional architecture of the organisation. The framework can be further described with reference to structural dilemmas, or tensions, three of which are *centralisation vs. devolution*; *differentiation vs. integration*; and *accountability vs. responsiveness*.

Johnson and Scholes (1993) argue that organisational structure is characterised by the nature of the balance that is found between *centralisation* and *devolution*. This can be represented by three stereotypes: *strategic planning*, *financial control* and *strategic control*. The distinctive features of these can be explained through reference to the role, in each case, of the organisational

centre (or chief executive). Strategic planning has the centre operating as the 'master-planner'; divisions and departments are concerned with operational detail only. Financial control has the centre in an administrative role, devolving strategic decisions to its business units. Under strategic control, the centre is a strategic shaper, concerned with overall strategy, balance of activities and policies but devolving other strategic decisions to its divisions.

Bolman and Deal (1984, 1989) argue that the fundamental dilemma in organisational design is the tension between *differentiation* and *integration*. Differentiation is the process that ensures that everyone is aware of their responsibilities (a vertical relationship), whereas integration is the process through which people are able to work interdependently (a lateral relationship).

Following the Education Reform Act (ERA) in 1988 and subsequent legislation, the educational environment has become increasingly market-orientated and hence more turbulent. In such conditions, schools need to be responsive to ensure survival and their management structures may need to be more flexible to enable structures to be defined contingently, based on the tasks required at the time (Everard & Morris, 1990, p. 163). In education, as central control over curriculum delivery has increased, at the same time responsibility for financial management and other related functions has been devolved. The resulting *accountability* predicates formal bureaucratic structures. Scott (1989, p. 12) argues that these concepts of *responsiveness*, responsibility and accountability are often in conflict. Organisational structure in education is cloaked in ambiguity.

The tensions, or dilemmas, discussed above highlight some of the central issues to consider when analysing formal organisational structure. These formal configurative structures are attended by social structures and these are considered in the next section.

Social Structures

Institutional cultures (members' values, beliefs etc.) stand in dialectical relationship to their underlying architecture (social structures or patterns of members' social relationships). A structural change often has cultural consequences; a shift in culture may alter social structures.

(Hargreaves, 1995, p. 30)

In addition to the model that explicates the tension between a school's instrumental-social control and its expressive-social cohesion, Hargreaves (*ibid.*) further developed his model of schools' cultural profiles by positing five *social structures* that underpin the way a school functions. The five structures – *political, micropolitical, maintenance, development* and *service* – can each be considered as either a *collegial* or *traditional* variation (or, more realistically, as a position on a continuum between the two extremes). Each of the ten variations is expressed as a structure-culture complex to indicate the close relationship between organisational structure and organisational culture. These variations are summarised in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1 – Social structure complexes

<i>Social structure</i>	<i>Traditional school</i>	<i>Collegial school</i>
POLITICAL	feudal-consultative	egalitarian-participative
MICROPOLITICAL	fissile-ingratiative	integrative-exclusive
MAINTENANCE	bureaucratic-positional	delegative-rotational
DEVELOPMENT	individualist-hierarchical	institutional-collaborative
SERVICE	autocratic-deferential	contractual-accountable

The *political structure* is the means by which power, authority and status are distributed. The traditional type of political structure is essentially *feudal*, with

the head operating as a monarch surrounded by barons (senior managers). Power, though, is never absolute and is always open to challenge. A *consultative* style is therefore adopted to temper accusations of authoritarianism. In the collegial school, the political structure is really quasi-collegial as the constraints of accountability prevent relationships from being fully *egalitarian*. The head acts as 'first among equals', allowing all staff rights to be participative. Fullan (1991), Campbell (1985), Moss-Kanter (1983), Herzberg (1966b), Andy Hargreaves (1992) and others believe strongly that participative approaches, carefully managed, have the greatest potential to effect long-term change.

Masters of change are also masters of the art of participation.

(Moss-Kanter, *op cit.*, pp. 241-2)

Whereas the political dimension refers to formal organisational structure, the *micropolitical structure* relates to the functioning of the informal network of individuals and groups, who seek to use their resources of authority and influence to further their interests (Hoyle, 1986). In a traditional school culture, the micropolitical structure is *fissile*, the organisation having a tendency to break up into smaller groups as individuals struggle for power and influence. This results in an *ingratiative* culture, where staff attempt to curry favour with the head. In turn, the head will employ strategies such as 'divide and rule' to manipulate situations and retain control. Collegial schools are characterised by an *integrative* drive towards consensus. Although decision-making is unlikely to be democratic in style, approaches will be participative. Where a small group emerges who do not integrate effectively into 'the way we do things around here' (Bower, 1996), they are marginalised. Newcomers are expected to fit in to the ideological paradigm; the culture is therefore *exclusive*. The political and micropolitical structures interlock, expressing the formal and informal functioning (respectively) of the school.

There is a further pairing of social structures that are also often in tension: the *maintenance* and *development* structures. Through these structures, a tension is found between permanence and flexibility or, as described earlier, between accountability and responsiveness. A school's maintenance structure is the means through which order and continuity are controlled. In a traditional school this involves a *bureaucratic* approach, with rules and regulations to guide decision-making procedures and the handling of problems. The culture is *positional*: teachers have clear, closely specified job descriptions and designated sphere of authority. In contrast, in a collegial school the maintenance structure has a looser role distribution, within which *all* staff share the burden of unpopular jobs. School policies are not accepted without considerable support and commitment across the staff. Responsibilities are *delegated* but *rotated* in a culture of trust.

Where hierarchical, bureaucratic systems are designed for maintenance, 'flatter', more flexible systems are more suitable for organisational development. In traditional cultures, structures are not designed for innovation. Heads think they have the best ideas and, therefore, adopt top-down strategies that are implemented through the organisational *hierarchy*. Staff development is a matter of staff volunteering and teachers are free to innovate on an *individualist* basis, providing that they adhere to rules and regulations. Collegial cultures have stronger development hierarchies. Colleagues are encouraged to take initiative and innovate, regardless of their standing in the organisational hierarchy. Innovation works at a whole-school *institutional* level. This is supported by team-focused *collaborative* ways of working.

The last of Hargreaves' five social structures is the *service structure*. It is through the service structure that relationships between the organisation's staff and its other key stakeholders are defined. The service structure of a traditional school culture is characterised by the sharp boundary that exists between professionals and others. Parents are expected not to interfere with the

educational process. This is a perspective that is *autocratic* in origin and although it need not be authoritarian in character, it does require *deferential* compliance. In the collegial school, relationships are *contractual* in nature and built on the concept of open partnership. Such contracts require mutual *accountability*.

Schools are typically combinations of traditional and collegial structures and this mix is influenced by government educational policy, e.g. British contemporary policy favours traditional political structures but collegial service structures (Hargreaves, 1995). The characteristics of a school's development structure influence its 'capacity for innovation', a key area of interest for this inquiry.

Capacity for Innovation

Hargreaves (1995) argues that, in conditions of uncertainty and turbulence, collegial approaches generally have the greatest potential to handle change. However, in a collegial culture where there is resistance to externally imposed change and consensus is not easily reached, implementation of strategy can be delayed or even rejected. In contrast, although traditional approaches, of their nature, have a weak technology to implement change, resistance forces are easier to overcome.

In order to manage change, it is, above all, the School's *development structure* that needs to meet the conditions for collegiality (Hopkins *et al.*, 1997). Ainscow *et al.* (2000, p. 10) outline six key conditions that characterise a school's development structure and enhance its capacity for development:

- proper attention to the potential benefits of *inquiry and reflection*;
- a commitment to *collaborative planning*;

- the *involvement* of staff, students and the community in school policies and decisions;
- a commitment to *staff development*;
- effective *coordination* strategies;
- effective *leadership* - but not just of the head; the leadership function is spread throughout the school.

These are considered in turn:

Inquiry and reflection

Where schools understand the potential of internally generated information about how the school is working, they are better placed to sustain improvement effort around strategically chosen developmental priorities. With such an approach, schools are able to achieve *programme coherence* (Fullan, 2000b), i.e. the ability to be selective in their accommodation, development and coordination of internally and externally generated innovations. Furthermore, these schools have a greater facility to monitor the effectiveness of these strategies.

Collaborative planning

The quality of school-level planning has been identified as a central factor in enabling the school to develop. Plans should be congruent with the school's vision so that the school can then grow in ways that are compatible with its beliefs and values. For planning to be worthwhile, it must lead to action and inclusive approaches that involve staff have the greatest potential for success (Fullan, 1991). The process of planning is at least as important as the plan itself.

It is through collective planning that goals emerge, differences can be resolved and a basis for action created.

(Ainscow *et al.*, 1994, p. 53)

In their review of school effectiveness literature, Gray *et al.* (1999) found that the most effective leadership and management styles combined the establishment of a clear direction for the organisation with approaches that involved the staff in planning how to achieve the associated goals.

The effective school achieves a balance, then, in its management between the vertical push and the horizontal pull.

(*ibid.*, p. 28)

Processes of monitoring and adjustment are further stressed, in order to ensure that intentions are realised, where possible, and reshaped in the light of new circumstances.

Involvement

Successful schools establish patterns of working that foster feelings of involvement. They are, in general, well-integrated communities, within which all involved have a high sense of commitment to the school. Mulford *et al.* (2001) report that recent research evidence highlights 'involvement' as a major factor in successful school reform:

Success is more likely where people act rather than are always reacting. are empowered, involved in decision-making through a transparent, facilitative and supportive structure, and are trusted, respected and encouraged.

(ibid., p. 4)

Schools, therefore, need to develop strategies that encourage the involvement of pupils, all staff (not just teachers), parents, governors, external support agencies and the community at large. Pupils, in particular, are often overlooked:

Where innovations fail to take root in schools and classrooms, it may be because students are guardians of the existing culture and, as such, represent a powerful conservative force, and that unless we give attention to the problems that pupils face, we may be overlooking a significant feature of the innovation process.

(Rudduck, 1991, p. 57)

Handy (1993) warns that any invitation to participate in decision-making must be genuine and the task must be worthwhile to the individuals involved. Furthermore, participants need both the skills to work together productively and the information required to make considered judgements.

Staff development

Powerful strategies that link staff development to school improvement need to fulfil two essential criteria: first of all they need to relate to and enhance ongoing practice in the school and, secondly, they should link to and strengthen other internal features of the school's organisation.

(Ainscow *et al.*, 1994, p. 53)

For improvement strategies to be effective in the long term, the school needs to become a community of learners. For the teaching staff, the school should be a context for professional learning. Furthermore, there should be a clear relationship between staff development and the school development plan.

Coordination

Schools are sometimes described as 'loosely-coupled systems' (Weick, 1976). They comprise a variety of groups and individuals, often working in relative isolation from each other, working towards typically ambiguous goals. This complexity is a serious challenge to rational, bureaucratic views of organisational theory (e.g. Weber, 1947). Ainscow *et al.* (2000) argue for a well coordinated, cooperative style of working that gives individual teachers the confidence to improvise as they work towards agreed goals, i.e. a 'loose-tight' (Peters & Waterman, 1982) approach to coordination.

Leadership

Leadership relates to the processes involved in helping an organisation to work towards goals, or be 'vision-led' (Senge, 1992; Handy, 1993). To sustain organisational improvement, leaders need the characteristics of consistency, integrity and self-knowledge (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). However, school

leadership is not exclusively the function of the head. It is becoming increasingly clear that effective schools have *distributive leadership* (Mulford *et al.*, 2001; Scheerens, 1992, p. 89) operating throughout the organisation.

In successful schools leadership density rules.

(Sergiovanni, 2001, p. x)

The final section of this chapter summarises the related issues of strategy, school development planning and organisational culture in order to provide a concise conceptual framework for the case study activity.

Summary of key issues

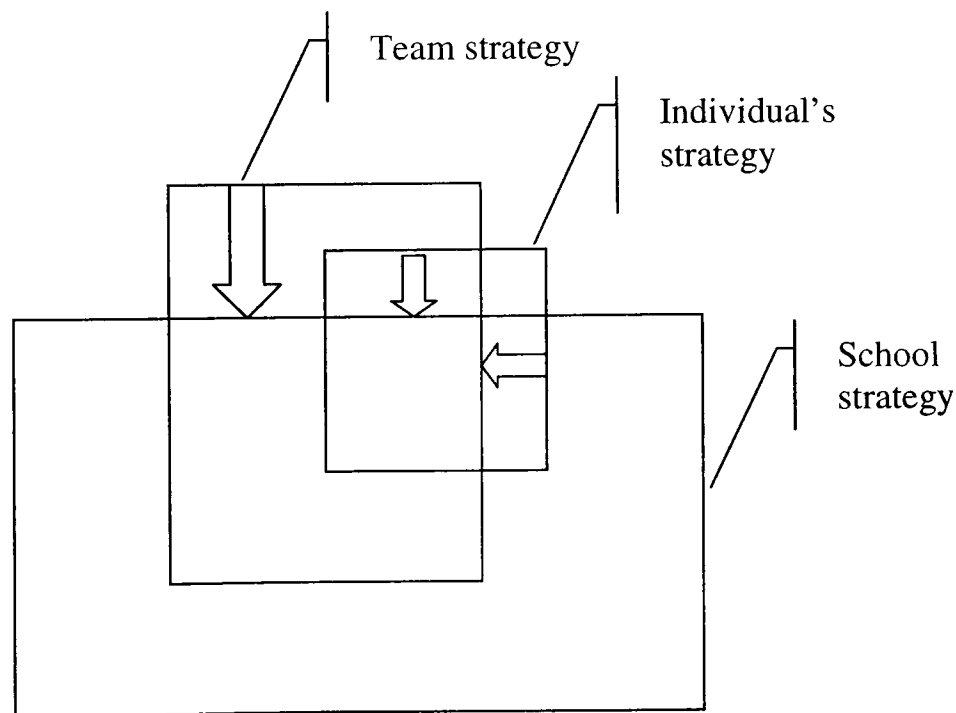
Strategy and the field of strategic management have not been well understood within the context of education. School leaders are often, quite correctly, mistrustful of strategic management models that have their origins in private-sector business contexts. However, widespread conceptions of managerialism can close minds to management theory incorporating participatory approaches that value the contribution that each individual can make to an organisation's ongoing reappraisal of its core governing principles.

The premises of the 'planning school' and the 'learning school' are greatly separated (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998). However, as advocated by Weindling (1997), it may be helpful to bring these conceptions together to create a realistic model of strategy development that suits the complexity of the core task of leading and managing a school within the context of national educational policy. The work of Fidler (1996), together with Davies and Ellison (1995, 1996, 1997, 1999), has largely been located within the planning view paradigm, although 'strategic intent' (Davies & Ellison, 1997; Hamel &

Prahalad, 1989) is a helpful development in the growing orthodoxy of educational management in schools. Strategy, for a school leader, is centrally concerned with how the school should aim to develop and improve in the context of its culture, organisational structure, current and anticipated resources and the changing educational environment. The latter, critically, incorporates the post-ERA characteristics of devolved responsibilities for school self-management and governance in a context of increasingly centralised control over the curriculum and a culture of increasing performativity¹, e.g. through the imposition of benchmarking.

The planning school view holds that the actions of individuals should be framed and evaluated within the context of their team's and organisation's core strategy as represented, for example, through school improvement planning action plans. I have represented this schematically in Diagram 2.6 below:

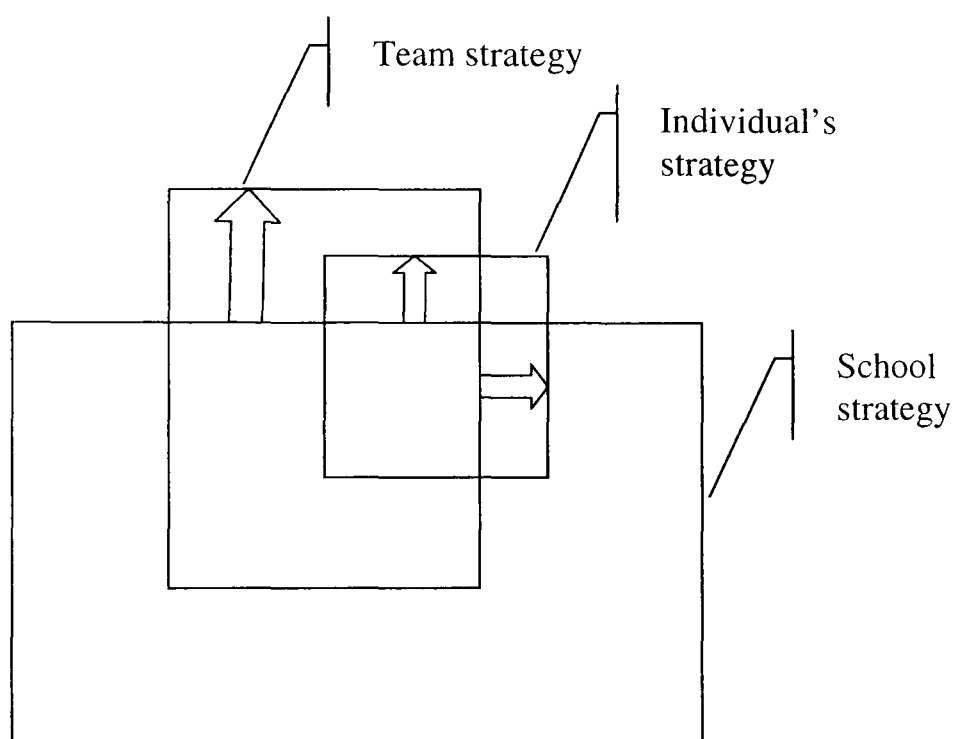
Diagram 2.6 – 'Planning school' model of strategic management



¹ 'The use of measurable performance outcomes as yardsticks of both individual and organisational 'achievement' and as ways of representing individuals and organisations' (Ball, 1999, p. 90)

The systemic planning mechanisms aim for maximum coincidence between the intended actions of individuals, their teams' action plans and the School's overarching deliberate strategy. By contrast, a learning school perspective sees organisational strategy as the confluence of the personal and professional growth of its constituent members through the medium of a reality-defining vision. This is represented by Diagram 2.7.

Diagram 2.7 – 'Learning school' model of strategic management

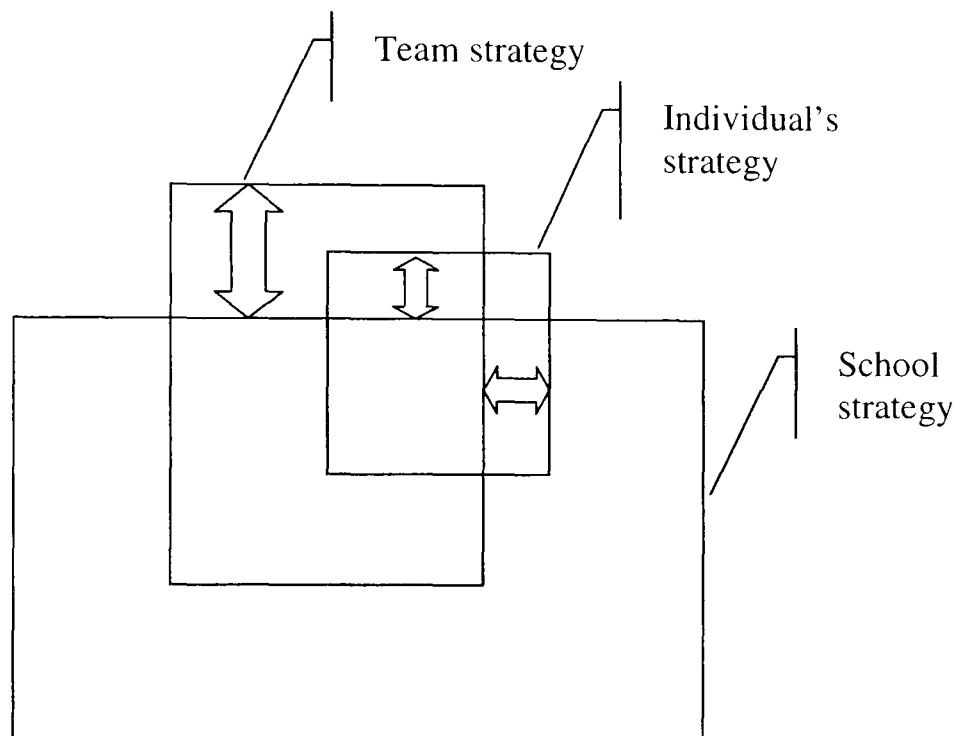


In this model, the team's strategy expands to accommodate the individual's strategy and the school's strategy expands to accommodate both the team's and the individual's strategy.

As discussed, either of these distinctively different approaches has serious shortcomings for a school aiming to increase its capacity for self-improvement in a system characterised by bureaucratic systems of accountability and a national culture of performativity.

What is required, then, is a model (Diagram 2.8) that better represents the tensions of accountability and responsiveness and of differentiation and integration.

Diagram 2.8 – Tensioned model of strategic management



This is a more pragmatic model that recognises that the aims and aspirations of individuals, teams and the school as a whole are in a necessary state of tension. Without the ‘planning school’ pull to the centre, the school’s strategy will lose definition; without the ‘learning school’ outwards push, the strategy will not accommodate the emergent strategy that can best support organisational growth.

This tension is, to a degree, created and constrained by the school’s organisational structure. More fundamentally, perhaps, it is related to the informal social structures that define the school’s operations and relationships and underpin its cultural profile. The nature of the tension itself, then, is a key area of interest.

The fields of school improvement and school effectiveness provide a good indication of the situational characteristics that are required for capacity building (the IQEA and ISEP projects, in particular, lay a helpful foundation). These are the conditions that, together with a sustained focus on teaching and learning, are supportive of school improvement efforts designed to enhance learning outcomes. The practice of school development planning through which schools prioritise their efforts needs to be considered alongside the management arrangements that yield the conditions for further organisational development. Furthermore, development planning needs to be considered within the wider context of organisational integrity and intent, i.e. how does the school wish to see itself and what is its broad strategy for self-actualisation.

Having reviewed the literature, the next chapter outlines the study's methodology, which is designed to elicit, analyse and interpret the views (on the issues discussed above) of staff and governors in the case study school.

3. Methodology

This chapter provides a theoretical appraisal of, and justification for, the research approach adopted. In the context of a complex field of inquiry, the case study approach is justified and described. The following specific issues are then examined: the role of the researcher, the ethics of the research and the nature of the claims that could justifiably be made from an inquiry of this nature. An overview of the range of research techniques follows, indicating their relationship to the research questions and to each other. Two further sections are included in this chapter. These relate to the methods of data collection relating to the areas of: **‘Strategy and strategy development’** and **‘The school development plan: its role in the development and implementation of strategy’**; and **‘Culture, organisational structure and the capacity for change’**. Each of these two sections is subdivided into separate commentaries that describe each of the research techniques employed, with the associated methods of data analysis.

Research approach

The ambiguity theories of educational management (Cohen & March, 1986) stress the uncertainty and complexity that characterise the school environment. Furthermore, the cultural and political views of strategy formation suggest that the assumptions of the strategic planning paradigm are, at best, questionable. The research methodology for this study needed, therefore, to be well suited to this ambiguity.

Parlett and Hamilton (1972, pp. 142-143) argue that the number of factors in schools is so large, and the interrelationships between these factors are so complex, that quantitative research alone cannot be effective. What was

needed, in order to address the research questions formulated, was an interpretive approach that would enable me to produce a detailed study that would explore and problematise the issues of concern, i.e. the research questions, within my own school. The research was therefore conceived as a single case study.

Pring (2000, pp. 40, 41) explains that case studies start from the premise that:

... any unit of investigation in which persons were involved could only be understood if the perspectives of those involved (and the interaction of those perspectives) were taken into account. Indeed these would be central to the research.

This was the starting point for this inquiry: I was researching colleagues' perspectives on practice, with the aim of making a contribution to the research-based knowledge on strategic management in schools. Ball (1991, p.175) describes how he used case study material, both his own and others', as an important source for 'Micropolitics' his text on school organisation.

This inquiry was, in fact, originally conceived as the final part of a broader research design that began with a survey of opinion of headteachers of beacon schools, continued with a more detailed examination of strategic planning in a small sample of schools and concluded with a close examination of strategy development in my own school. I aimed to use the technique of progressive focusing to establish the most salient issues for examination and development and then utilise an action research methodology to track my progress whilst making changes to the practice of school improvement planning.

As with many research projects, my final report does not reflect the breadth of the data collected or the changes that were made to this original plan. Having conducted the first part of my inquiry (the survey of headteacher opinion), I

realised that I would need to change the research design. This decision was influenced by several factors. Firstly, the sophistication of my ideas about strategic management had increased greatly, mainly as a result of the wider literature review that had been conducted by that stage. This, in itself, cast doubt over the usefulness of the data collected. Secondly, given the scope and complexity of the research focus and the time allowed for completion of the field work, I decided to dispense with the investigation of strategic management in a sample of schools. Finally, I also changed the planned methodology for the final case study of strategy development and implementation in my own school. Over the earlier stages of the research and unconnected with my research project, I had convened a programme through which teachers at my school were conducting action research inquiries. As my understanding of the cyclical nature of the action research approach grew, I became less confident that I would have the time and the opportunities to conduct a rigorous inquiry of this nature.

Action research is an approach that attempts to improve practice by changing it and learning from the consequences of the changes (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992, pp. 22-5). In an action research inquiry, the researcher makes planned interventions, collects data and generates evidence of influence and, on occasions, presents claims of educative influence for validation within a community of inquiry. The new insights yielded by this process lead to further interventions and the cycle continues. With little more than a year within which to conduct the field work and, at that stage, with further literature in the fields of school improvement and school effectiveness to review, I decided that a more pragmatic, blended methodology would be more realistic and would afford me greater flexibility within the time frame.

In the next section, the advantages and disadvantages of being a practitioner researcher, and member of the leadership team, are discussed. The measures taken to enhance the validity of the account are further outlined.

Role as researcher

My role as a researcher is not straightforward to define. As deputy headteacher, I was clearly involved in the area that I would be investigating. On a formal basis, I was working through the process of school improvement planning and implementation over the period of the research. Having chosen to research my own school, it is important that I acknowledge the constraints that were a function of my professional responsibilities, whilst also recognising the value of my local knowledge of the context in which the research took place. My professional role and 'insider knowledge' gave me certain advantages, namely: access to documents; existing rapport with colleagues; background information; and opportunities to integrate the research activity with professionally orientated work. Teacher researchers may have a greater purchase on the set of accepted social rules and values within which the teachers are operating than 'outside' researchers. Their tacit knowledge of the context may provide them with an interpretive framework with the potential to provide a more valid representation of the situation they are researching (Stenhouse, 1975).

However, there were threats to the internal validity of the study, i.e. the extent to which the findings accurately describe the phenomena being researched (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). The quality of the data could be compromised through the micropolitics (Ball, *op cit.*; Hoyle, 1986, 1989), i.e. power relations (or perceptions of such) between colleagues and myself. Of course, *reactivity*, i.e. the influence that the researcher has on the situation being researched (Cohen *et al.*, *op cit.*), can never be eliminated completely and the potential for this *interference* in a case study, in particular, is unavoidable. The research design was intended to address this issue through the collection of data in a variety of contexts over an extended time period (*ibid.*, p.108). McCormick and James (1988, p. 191) argue that reactivity can be combatted through *reflexivity* (Schön 1983), a process or orientation that requires researchers to monitor

closely their own interactions with participants and their own reactions and biases. This was a key guiding principle for the field work.

In the next section of this chapter, some ethical guidelines for the conduct of the research and dissemination of the outcomes are considered.

Research ethics

Within the context of research in an educational setting, Simons (1995, p. 436) defines ethics as:

... the search for rules of conduct that enable us to operate defensibly in the political contexts in which we have to conduct educational research.

The political perspective is especially important here as it was of great importance that relationships in my place of work and with other interested parties were not adversely affected as a result of my research approach. This concern to 'tread carefully' had to be considered in parallel with the objective of producing an authentic account.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1981, pp. 43-44) provide a list of ethics for practitioner research. I have included a summary version of this (the lead statements only have been listed and some of the statements have been combined) and supplemented it with my own commentary of how I attempted to address each of the issues raised:

Observe protocol and negotiate with those affected and make your principles of procedure binding and known.

I wrote to the Chief Education Officer and the Chair of Governors, explaining the nature, purpose and scope of my work. I had already received support and encouragement from the Headteacher and also talked through my action plan with him in greater detail before commencing the field work. Furthermore, I communicated my intentions and established consent with the staff of the School as a whole. A letter was sent to all staff and this was reinforced by a brief verbal explanation during a weekly briefing session. If there were aspects of the methods and processes involved that made anyone feel uncomfortable, it was important that, where possible, they did not feel obligated to participate.

Involve participants and report progress.

The involvement of the Headteacher, in particular, was key; I discussed my progress with him regularly. Initially, I was uncertain about how I could report my progress to the staff as a whole. This needed further consideration as the work progressed but opportunities became available through staff meetings and, less formally, through discussion.

Obtain explicit authorisation before you observe or examine documentation.

All relevant documentation was accessible to me but, nevertheless, authorisation was also sought, as a courtesy, from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, to examine school documentation *for the wider purposes of the research.*

Negotiate descriptions of people's work.

I aimed not to take my own conceptions of participants' roles and contributions for granted. How people viewed their work in the context of the school's wider organisational design was an important consideration.

Negotiate accounts of others' points of view but retain the right to report your work.

This was addressed through the discipline of respondent validation. Nisbet and Watt (1984) suggest that respondent validation can be particularly useful in case study research, as respondents might suggest a better way of expressing the issue or may wish to add or qualify points. They also recommend that participants need to have rights of veto and suggest that, where there is disagreement over the interpretation of verbal or written accounts, the participants' differing conceptions should be reported alongside those of the researcher. However, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) disagree, arguing that respondents are not in a privileged position to be commentators on their actions. Given my role in the School I understood the need to handle this issue with sensitivity, whilst retaining the integrity of the findings.

Obtain explicit authorisation before using quotations.

In general, I considered this a matter of judgement: it seemed reasonable to me that use of a verbatim phrase for illustration or amplification, reported confidentially, did not necessarily require 'explicit authorisation'. Perhaps where the lines between researcher as researcher and researcher as senior manager are unclear, the requirement for such authorisation may be more important. I incorporated the possibility of reporting quotations into my validation procedures.

Negotiate reports for various levels of release.

This principle is related to the conditions that could be set that are related to access. ‘Gatekeepers’ could allow the research to take place subject to a report of a certain style being made at the end of the process. At the outset, I indicated to the Chair of Governors and the County’s Chief Education Officer, that I would send them a full draft report before circulating the report more widely within the school community. Through discussion with the Head and Chair, I also communicated my intention to present a brief summary to the staff as a whole and to the full Governing Body.

Accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality.

In a single-institution case study, it is not possible to meet conditions of confidentiality where the organisational role of an individual is substantively important to the findings and there are few individuals (or one individual) with the same role, e.g. the headteacher. Here, collaboration, validation and authorisation are important. Cohen *et al* (2000, p. 62) suggest that ‘the more sensitive, intimate, or discrediting the information, the greater is the obligation on the researcher’s part to make sure that guarantees of confidentiality are carried out in spirit and letter.’ The staff and governors of the School were alerted to the limits on confidentiality described above and assured that, in all other cases, conditions of confidentiality would be met. In practice, the colleagues whose anonymity could not be protected were the Chair of Governors, members of the senior team and the Bursar; each of these gave their consent, through validation procedures, to be written into the report identifiably.

The goal of the scientific method of research (e.g. Popper, 1963) has been to produce objective generalisations. This case study shares neither the presuppositions nor the goals of the traditional positivist paradigm, although

quantitative techniques are employed within a mixed methodology. The next section suggests alternatives to generalisation that are more appropriate types of outcome for the inquiry.

Generalisability and fittingness

In the positivist paradigm, generalisation from a case study is not logically possible (Pring, 2000). A case study is concerned with a particular situation and findings cannot be directly extrapolated into general theory. However, as Pring goes on to argue, 'concepts are necessarily general in their application' (*ibid.*, p. 42) and it would, therefore, be philosophically mistaken to conclude that case studies cannot provide the basis from which epistemological theory can be created.

Schofield (1989) argues that what is important, in considering qualitative research, is the extent to which the findings can be judged on the basis of their relevance and application to other situations. He concludes that qualitative studies can increase the understanding of phenomena that occur in situations other than those involved in the research, but that this is only possible if detailed contextual information is included. This enables readers to make informed judgements about whether the conclusions drawn from the study of a particular case, or cases, are useful in understanding the situation of interest to them. Guba and Lincoln (1982) are in agreement. They suggest replacing the term 'generalisability' with the more pragmatic 'fittingness'. This is a concept that requires the reader to consider the logic of the research in the context in which it is conducted in order that a reasoned judgement can be made about the extent to which the findings can be used. From a subjectivist perspective, different people interpret the same account differently as they have different schema, i.e. frames of reference (e.g. Eisner, 1993). Both description and analysis are needed, allowing the reader to see the value of local knowledge

without having to accept it at face value (Page, 2000). Furthermore, Argyris and Schön (1996) argue that in such circumstances 'reflective transfer' is needed, whereby the validity of a model that is carried over from one organisational setting to another is established through a further inquiry, with modifications likely to be necessary.

Having so far considered the role of the researcher, ethical issues and the nature of generalisability, the next section provides an overview of the research design and, in particular, the research techniques that were employed to collect data relevant to the questions of interest.

Overview

The field work was carried out over the period February 2001 through to January 2002, the 2001/02 SIP being published in April 2002. The research was designed to help me to gain a better understanding of the culture of the School and stakeholder perspectives on some of the key processes involved in strategy formation and implementation. Through improving my understanding of the nature of strategy and its implementation and gaining a fuller appreciation of the School's culture and organisational structure, I aimed to gain a better appreciation of how the School could operate strategically in a manner that could be complementary to its cultural profile. My aim was to 'capture complexity and contradiction within the setting' (Metz, 2000). I needed to challenge my own assumptions, both about the context (i.e. what I felt I knew about the School) and the processes involved (i.e. strategy, school development plans and organisational design). I therefore aimed to gain as wide a variety of perspectives as possible and to work reflexively on my developing critique of the School's organisational paradigm and notions of strategic action. A research design that incorporated records of the life of the school, e.g. observations of formal and informal meetings and day-to-day

written communications, was simply beyond the scope of what I could achieve. Specific opportunities were created to collect data, primarily through interview and questionnaire techniques.

In practice, each research technique provided data relating to several research questions. However, in general, field work relating to the first two areas of interest, 'strategy and strategy development' and 'the school development plan and its role in the implementation of strategy', comprised a combination of two research techniques, namely:

- analysis of the school improvement plans for 2000/01 and 2001/02, and the internal documentation outlining the school improvement planning process (which I had written, in consultation with the senior team); and
- interviews with colleagues (teaching and non-teaching) at differing positions in the management hierarchy and with governors.

The research questions relating to 'culture, organisational design and the management of change' were investigated through the use of:

- the School' staff handbook to provide descriptive data regarding the formal organisational hierarchy;
- an 'Organisational Design' questionnaire designed by the researcher;
- interview data (to a limited degree);
- a questionnaire called 'The School Management Scale' (Smith *et al.*, 1998a), designed for the Improving School Effectiveness Project (ISEP); and
- a battery of three survey techniques: 'The Culture of School', 'The Structures of School' and 'The Conditions of School', used in the Improving Education for All (IQEA) school improvement project (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994).

The use of a variety of sources of data is important and helpful because some sources yield data of a particular type more successfully than others. Furthermore, the use of more than one method of data collection for the examination of particular issues improves the validity of the findings. If findings are dependent on the methods used, then the use of contrasting methods helps to expose the degree of this dependence and hence the degree of confidence with which a finding can be deemed trustworthy (Lin, 1976). This is the technique of *triangulation*, which attempts to ‘...map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint...’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 112).

The next section describes the techniques that were used to research colleagues’ conceptions of strategy development and implementation in the School and, in particular, their views on the school development planning process.

Research on: strategy and strategy development; and the school development plan: its role in the development and implementation of strategy

Documentary analysis

School improvement planning documentation currently in use in the School was examined. Analysis of the documentation helped to clarify my understanding of the formal processes that had been established to guide the school improvement planning process. The structure and style of the documents were examined (as important referents in the search for greater understanding of the process), as was the choice of what had been included

(and excluded) in these significant communications. The other members of the SMT, to whom I gave each a written copy, validated this section of the analysis.

Interviews

In order to examine the perspectives of staff and governors on the process of strategy development and implementation and, in particular, the school improvement planning process, I needed to understand the perspectives of those involved in greater detail and I chose to interview a representative sample of these stakeholders. The sample of twelve members of staff and governors provided a representation right through the School's formal organisational hierarchy, grouped in accordance with Mintzberg's building blocks of organisational structure (Mintzberg, 1979). It was stratified as follows:

Strategic Apex:

- Chair of Governors;
- governor (member of the Teaching and Learning Committee);
- Headteacher;
- deputy headteacher;
- senior teacher.

Middle Line:

- head of faculty;
- head of year;
- subject leader.

Technostructure:

- Learning Support Systems (ICT) Manager;

- Bursar.

Support Staff:

- learning support assistant (LSA).

Operating Core:

- teacher.

Clearly, the responses of a colleague in the sample would not be generally representative of the views held by other colleagues with similar positions of responsibility. Nevertheless, this approach had the potential to expose issues that were role-specific and to explore the interdependence of colleagues in different positions in the organisational structure. Furthermore, regardless of their role, a sample of twelve from a population of sixty-one staff and twenty governors provided a reasonable cross-section of perspectives on the issues discussed.

Oppenheim (1992) distinguishes between several types of interview and includes *exploratory interviews*, which need to be conducted in a spirit of trust and openness and are designed to develop hypotheses, often based on participants' opinions, rather than being used to collect factual information. In this vein, the interviews were designed to explore colleagues' perspectives on the school development planning process and the School's organisational design and, where appropriate, broader issues of strategy development and implementation. The development planning process is, supposedly, the clearest representation of how strategy is interpreted, refined, implemented, monitored and evaluated in the School. How colleagues viewed it would inform my understanding of how strategy could be developed and implemented more effectively. Strategy development and implementation that occurred outside this process would further be discussed, as appropriate, depending on the experience and responses of interviewees.

The format for the interviews was semi-structured in order to allow unanticipated issues to surface and hence increase the conceptual density of the investigation. Cohen *et al.* (2000, p. 147) argue that the value of a semi-structured interview is that it:

... permits flexibility rather than fixity of sequence of discussions, and it also enables participants to raise and pursue issues and matters that might not have been included in a pre-devised schedule.

This is appropriate as an alternative to a more standardised approach, where the researcher is interested in the individual, personalised accounts of the respondents and the responses cannot be pre-categorised into a predictable, finite data set. Patton (1980) argues that less structured interviews can create difficulties for the researcher as some salient issues may not be examined at all and the variation in the way that questions are asked compromises the comparability of the responses. These potential weaknesses are pertinent and significant but the value of flexibility and a less formal mode of interaction seems to outweigh the argument for a more systematic approach. Furthermore, replicating the wording and sequencing of questions does not guarantee comparability as social interaction is sufficiently complex to give each interview a different character (Scheurich, 1995).

Questions were prepared for the interviews (included as Appendix 1), but these were used flexibly, as described above, following the lines of thought of the interviewees. Also, for the governors' interviews, it would not have been appropriate to ask direct questions regarding the experience of writing and using action plans; a focus on the broader issues of strategy development, implementation and evaluation was therefore sustained for these discussions. It was important that I was aware of the effect that my position of responsibility could have on the responses of the interviewees. I am, both through my job description and through my public actions, the person in the

School who manages the school improvement planning process. By adopting an approach that aimed to convince the interviewee that I really did wish to gain as many perspectives as possible on the process in order to improve it, I hoped to find out what people really thought - to the degree that such a goal is achievable. Perhaps the success of this aspect of my research methodology rested on the extent to which interviewees felt that, by nature, that I was constructively self-critical. The clearest evidence that a respondent was uncomfortable with the situation and unwilling to say what he or she really thought would, perhaps, be a range of responses that were brief and lacking any element of risk (in the sense that they could potentially cause me disappointment or I could take offence). An alternative explanation, of course, would be that the interviewee did not understand the question sufficiently. Interviews were recorded on audio-tape, where permission was given, and recordings were made of nine of the interviews. Stenhouse (1982) notes that tape recordings guard against misrepresentation and help to capture the vividness of the speech. I made brief notes during the interviews on prepared sheets (one for each question), noting the basic arguments and selectively noting verbatim quotations; this facilitated the analysis of these records.

Playing back the tapes helped me to identify detailed responses on areas of interest with clear relevance to my research. I did not make full transcriptions of all of the interviews as this would have been too time-consuming, given the range of other research instruments that were being employed. I produced a summary account for each interview undertaken and classified the responses by constructing relationships between the data and the theory. Moreover, I validated my findings by sending a copy of the relevant section to each interviewee, inviting comment and asking for suggested revisions. This was done to limit the extent to which my analysis distorted the views of the respondents. All participants agreed that their comments had been recorded accurately and represented their views well.

Some of the interviews, as a function of their semi-structured nature, also provided data that were salient to the research questions on culture, organisational structure and capacity for change. The other techniques used to research these areas are examined in greater detail in the next section.

Research on culture, organisational structure and the capacity for change

Documentary analysis

I examined the School's staff handbook to produce a descriptive account of its formal organisational structure. I considered this important as any analysis of the nature and perceived influence of the School's social structures would need to be informed by an appraisal of the formal structures that define roles and hierarchical relationships.

'Organisational Design' questionnaire

I wanted to find out more about the perceptions of a wide range of staff on the organisational design of the School and in order to do so efficiently with the resources available, a questionnaire was designed and distributed. Indirectly, this was also a way of informing colleagues of an important dimension of my work and providing a foundation for the sample of interviews. The issues of interest were drawn from the literature review and questions were constructed to elicit an appraisal of the organisational design of the School from the perspective of the staff. All colleagues (sixty one in all) were issued with a questionnaire and, although these were to be completed anonymously, I collected details of job role, gender and length of service at the School. Through keeping anonymity, I felt I would secure a more favourable response

rate. Also, given my position in the School, as the focus of the questionnaire included judgements about style of management I considered that anonymity would help to limit the potential for associated bias in the responses (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Gillham, 2000). As a consequence of this anonymity, it was not possible to target those colleagues who did not respond with a follow-up letter. However, a general request was made for those colleagues who had not met the response deadline to get their returns back to me. Table 3.1 shows the stratification, by job role, gender and length of service, of both the staff team as a whole and the sample of colleagues who completed the questionnaire.

Table 3.1 – Profile of whole staff and ‘Organisational Design’ questionnaire respondents

No. of yrs→		0-1				2-4				5-10				>10				Total			
Job role ↓		A		S		A		S		A		S		A		S		A		S	
Teacher/ Co-ord.	M	6		1		0		0		1		1		2		1		9		3	
	F	4	10	2	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	3	0	1	9	18	3	6
Subject Leader	M	0		0		2		1		2		1		0		0		4		2	
	F	1	1	0	0	1	3	1	2	1	3	0	1	2	2	1	1	5	9	2	4
HOF/ HOY	M	1		1		1		0		2		0		2		2		6		3	
	F	0	1	0	1	2	3	1	1	2	4	2	2	1	3	0	2	5	11	3	6
Senior Manager	M	1		1		1		1		1		0		1		1		4		3	
	F	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	5	1	4
Learning Support	M	0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0	
	F	4	4	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	3	3
Non-teach staff	M	2		2		1		1		3		1		1		0		7		4	
	F	3	5	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	4	0	1	3	4	2	2	8	15	4	8
Total	M	10		5		5		3		9		3		6		4		30		15	
	F	12	22	6	11	7	12	4	7	6	15	2	5	8	14	4	8	33	63	16	31

Key: M – male; F – female; A – all staff; S – sample of respondents

The return rate, at 51%, was disappointing. The School was well represented in each of the bands for length of service with, perhaps, a slightly high proportion of staff in their first or second year and it is helpful that this profile was represented well in the sample of respondents. There was a gender balance that was similarly well represented and it was also helpful that the return-rate for non-teaching staff was of a similar order to that for teaching staff.

The questionnaire (included as Appendix 2) comprised both closed and open response questions. Closed questions were used to make the questionnaire easier to complete and to provide data in a categorised form that would aid analysis. This convenience comes at a cost: closed-response questionnaire items need to be treated with particular caution, as it is not possible to discriminate between a reluctant, unthoughtful response and a considered opinion. Gillham (*ibid.*) warns that, with such questions, people will sometimes select an answer whether they have an opinion or not. Three open response questions were included to allow ‘a window of opportunity for the respondent to shed light on an issue’ (Cohen *et al.*, *op cit.*, p. 256).

Most questions required a selection from alternative descriptions. For one question, rankings were used in order to elicit colleagues’ perceptions of the dominant management style of the SMT and the style that they would favour most. Respondents were asked to place four distinctively different descriptions of management style in rank order. Wilson and McLean (1994) argue that it is difficult for respondents to rank more than five items and this consideration helped to frame the question in a realistic way. For the question on rewards, given that rewards are often discussed in the school setting, I felt that respondents would be better placed to articulate their responses without having options from which to choose. I added some light structuring by eliciting three responses from each participant for this question.

The sequencing of the questions followed a common pattern: beginning with factual questions (job role, gender and the number of years worked at the School), moving on to largely closed questions and concluding with an open-ended ‘catch all’ question to bring other opinions to light. Oppenheim (1992) argues that this type of sequencing generally helps the respondent to have the confidence to work through the questionnaire to completion. I conducted a pilot and subsequently made some revisions to the instructional language of some questions, simplifying the structure and making instructions more direct.

Nevertheless, in retrospect, the questionnaire would have benefited from a simpler structure and a more consistent style of questioning.

One issue that caused me some concern was the reference that I made to the SMT in the questions asked. I wanted to know colleagues' perceptions of the values, opinions and actions of the senior team. If, in the view of colleagues, different members of the SMT had different management styles, respondents could have had difficulty aggregating these views into a unified view of the leadership group. Nevertheless, there were issues of a sensitive nature here and I did not want colleagues to give personalised accounts of the approaches of different members of the SMT. I wanted, rather, to build up a picture of the organisational paradigm and this would seem to require an aggregation of views, even from an individual respondent. A further difficulty that I had when referring to the SMT in this way was as a function of an insider's view of the exchange of information and decision-making processes within the senior team. There is a real sense in which 'top management' (in some contexts) could be considered to be the Head and the two deputy heads, as some strategic issues are discussed more closely, at least at first, amongst these three members. No doubt there is a further discrimination that could be made between the central views of the Headteacher and the views that are shared with the deputies. A consideration of the role of the Governing Body and the sense in which they operate as 'top management' introduces a range of further issues. I decided that I would need to simply acknowledge the difficulties that there are in defining 'top management' and investigate this definition and its relationship to strategic management through interview techniques. For the staff survey, in order to avoid a potentially confusing issue, in a reasonably challenging questionnaire, colleagues were asked to consider the values, opinions and actions of the Senior Management Team, rather than any other definitions of 'top management'.

My analysis and interpretation of the responses to this questionnaire survey were discussed in some detail during an SMT planning day; this helped to validate my findings and opened up further perspectives to explore.

Given the slightly disappointing return rate, and in order to increase the triangulation of the techniques that yield evidence on organisational design, I decided to use a further questionnaire survey, 'The School Management Scale'; this was designed by researchers for the Improving School Effectiveness Project (ISEP).

'The School Management Scale'

'The School Management Scale' (included as Appendix 3), was devised by Smith *et al* (1998a, 1998b) to provide a measure of a school's 'management and leadership climate', the factor that emerged through their research as the most dominant factor influencing school effectiveness. Their conclusions are supported by a review by Scheerens and Bosker (1997) of the research relating school leadership and management to school effectiveness. The characteristics that appeared to be critical included:

- support for teachers;
- shared vision and goals;
- participative decision-making, collegiality and collaboration; and
- a focus on school-based staff development.

The questionnaire was designed for, and therefore was only administered to, the population of teaching staff. Its design is simple: there are seventeen statements each of which require a rating of zero to four to be applied, to indicate the degree to which the respondent agrees with the statement. As for the previous questionnaire, confidentiality was assured.

By aggregating the total scores for these ratings across the completed questionnaires and then producing an average for the School, I was able to compare the 'management climate', as measured by this research tool, with the scores from a data set of thirty six other secondary schools, albeit from Scotland. More usefully, perhaps, I was able to analyse the profile of responses to the individual statements and compare this with the findings from other research instruments. The response rate of 76% was far more encouraging; this lends itself to more confident assertions about teachers' perceptions of the management climate of the School.

The final section of this methodological chapter describes three techniques devised by the IQEA school improvement project, through their work with participating schools, and incorporated into the research design for this study to facilitate an analysis of the School's culture and social structures.

'Improving the Quality of Education for All' (IQEA) Research Techniques

The techniques are drawn from 'Mapping Change in Schools – The Cambridge Manual of Research Techniques' (Ainscow et al., 1994).

The mapping approach is a way of developing research techniques which capture the perspectives of those involved in the change process in organisations such as schools, but do so in a way that is more efficient for the researcher, more interesting for the subject and more penetrating in terms of the quality of data, than has been possible in the most commonly used techniques in this field – the interview and the questionnaire.

(Hopkins *at al.*, 1996, p. 73)

These techniques are highly relevant to this study as they focus on a school's culture, management arrangements and internal conditions. They were developed to help IQEA researcher-consultants to work with teachers and managers in schools to gain a better understanding of the complexity of school change efforts. The authors explain that the impact of any change on student outcomes is governed by both individual-level and school-level actions. They relate the former to classroom activity and the latter to school climate, or ethos. This study is concerned with the relationship between school culture and design and strategy and does not directly examine classroom perspectives. The three school-level techniques, therefore, were selected from the full battery of six, the other three being designed to track changes to an individual's perspective and practice. The school-level techniques are:

- 'The Culture of School';
- 'The Structures of School'; and
- 'The Conditions of School'.

These resources are well suited to this study as they have the potential to:

... problematise the existing framing of the issues, encouraging a multifaceted collection of data.

(Fielding, 1997, p. 15)

Fielding (*ibid.*) reflects that school effectiveness research has much to offer but without techniques designed to engage practitioners, valuing their perspectives and recognising the specific characteristics of their schools, it will remain largely unscrutinised by the people for whom the research was undertaken.

These three techniques were employed as part of a school professional development and training day involving all staff (and five governors). This

provided me with an opportunity to collect data in a convenient way from the full staff team and a selection of governors. In 'The Culture of School' complete confidentiality could not be assured as the activity involved discussion in small groups. Nevertheless, across all three activities, the actual data for analysis was collected in such a way that individuals could not be identified. The day featured a plenary session where I was able to outline immediate aggregated responses to the 'Culture' and 'Conditions' activities with brief reference to the conceptual framework provided by the authors. Feedback from the day was extremely positive, with colleagues reporting that they had valued the opportunity to discuss these issues and make a contribution to the School's process of self-evaluation as part of its preparation for a further three-year strategy for improvement (see Appendix 4, Q. 4 for a full staff evaluation).

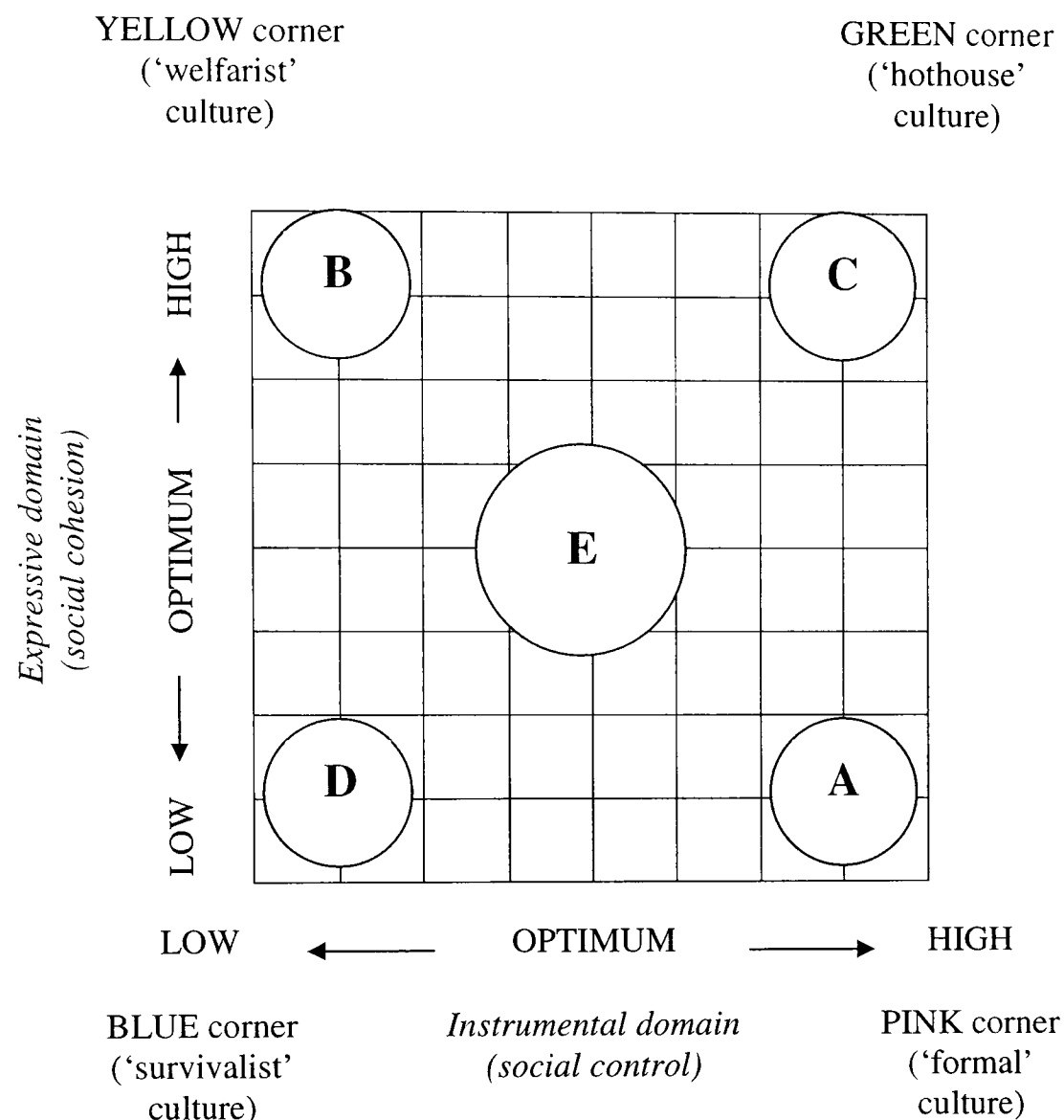
The three techniques, and the way that they were used, are described in the following sections. For an examination of perceived and preferred school culture, 'The Culture of School' was used.

'The Culture of School'

The purpose of this technique is to gain teachers' perspectives on the school's culture, their ideal school culture and the direction in which the school's culture is moving. In order to make it engaging it is presented as a board game for four players. Participants are organised into groups of four and each person is given a grid, as in Diagram 3.1 but without any of the labelling; each corner is simply coloured blue, yellow, pink and green. Each participant is also given a pack of four coloured cards, corresponding to the colours of the corners of the grid. On each card, there is a cameo description of a school culture (see Appendix 5 for the cameo descriptions). These cultures ('formal', 'hothouse', 'survivalist' and 'welfarist') are not described in extreme terms but do represent qualitatively different combinations of instrumental-social control

and expressive-social cohesion, a tension that is similar to the differentiation/integration dimension of organisational design (Bolman & Deal, 1984). They are shown on Diagram 3.1 as positions A, C, D and B respectively. Each individual is asked to mark three symbols on their grid: a spot is used to indicate their perception of the current position of the school in relation to these cameos; an asterisk shows their preferred position for the School; and an arrow indicates the direction in which they perceive the school's culture to be moving. In accordance with the manual, I asked the participants to do this independently before then using the counters and spare board provided to arrive at a group consensus. This latter activity is important for the process of discussion rather than the outcome itself, the individual records being used for analysis. For the purposes of analysis, each sheet was coded senior staff, support staff, governor or teaching staff.

Diagram 3.1 – ‘The Culture of School’ grid

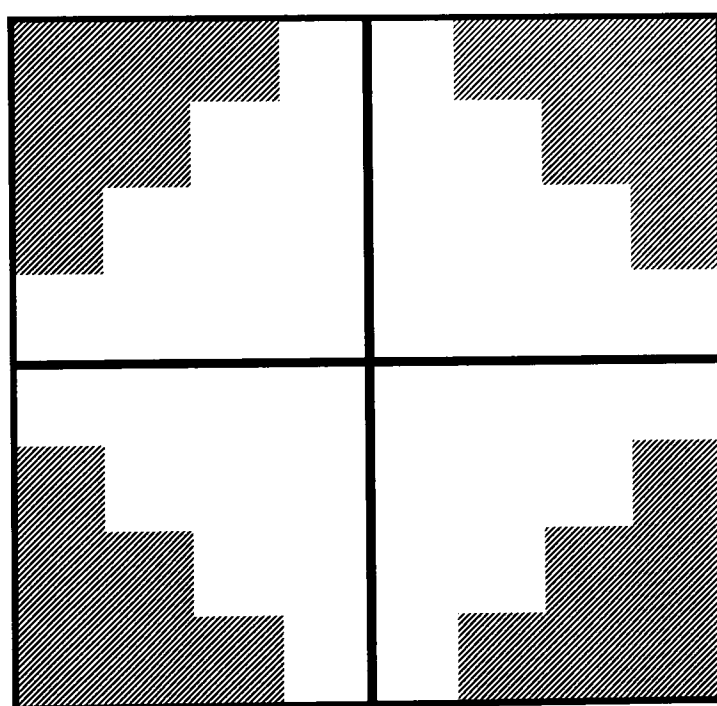


The technique is an aid to reflective inquiry and the theory is that, optimally, a school's culture will be best represented by a position that is quite central (position E) in the grid. This will represent well both the instrumental and expressive domains, both important factors in the management of change (Hargreaves, 1995).

In order to analyse the data generated by this activity, the symbols were transposed on to a single grid. This was done for the sample as a whole and then also by each category of staff. The grid was then divided into four quadrants of sixteen squares, each representing a cameo school culture. A

further overlapping central section of sixteen squares was used to identify responses that were generally in balance between the cultures. Results were then generated, by category (support staff, SMT etc.) with reference to these five grid areas. For some of the analyses, each quadrant was divided into two sections, as shown below in Diagram 3.2. A response in the shaded 'extreme' section (shaded) indicates a clear identification with the statement for this type of culture, at the expense of the three other types. A response in the unshaded 'moderate' area of a quadrant suggests a more balanced tendency towards the culture concerned.

Diagram 3.2 – Quadrant division in 'The Culture of School'



Key: Shaded areas are 'extreme' sections of each quadrant; unshaded areas are 'moderate' sections.

The analysis of the participants' perceptions of the direction in which the School's culture is moving was done by using a two-way table that showed where a respondent had positioned the School's culture (as a quadrant) and also the quadrant towards which the arrow was directed.

In order to gain perspectives on the social structures underpinning school culture, 'The Structures of School' technique was employed.

'The Structures of School'

This technique takes the form of a questionnaire survey, with five continua explored. Each continuum represents a social structure that underpins a school's culture.

All staff were given an allocation of time to complete this survey on an individual basis and a full complement of responses was collected. The questionnaire comprised five sheets with an identical format. On each occasion, participants were asked to mark a tick in one of eight boxes arranged as a continuum between two contrasting statements to indicate the present position of the School in relation to that issue. They were also asked to mark an asterisk to indicate their preferred position. Each sheet also featured a comment box in which respondents were asked to describe the School. Colleagues were asked to imagine that they were contributing to a conversation between two teachers and making a response about their own school. Senior managers and governors were identified by further coding boxes on the front sheet. An example of one of these sheets is included as Appendix 6.

For each of the five social structures (*political, micropolitical, maintenance, development and service*), the more extreme positions of the eight-part continuum are defined by two contrasting statements that relate to two school types: *traditional* and *collegial* (Hargreaves, *ibid.*). Cross-tabulation of the five social structures: against the traditional/collegial dichotomy yields ten structure-culture complexes (as discussed on pp. 81-84 of this study). The statements and their relationship to the ten structure-culture complexes are tabulated in Appendix 7. By assigning a score of one to eight to the eight boxes between the traditional and collegial statements respectively, the mean and

standard deviation could be calculated for each of the five social structures. This analysis was done for each of the sub-groups.

The 'Conditions of School' technique is described in the concluding section. This was used in combination with 'The School Management Scale' to analyse the School's capacity for development.

'The Conditions of School'

The third of the school-level IQEA techniques is a 24-item survey of staff opinion. There are six sets of four statements, each set relating to a 'key condition' for school improvement (*inquiry/reflection, planning, involvement, staff development, coordination and leadership*, as discussed on pp. 84-88 of this study). According to the authors, these conditions are the most significant determinants of a school's capacity for managing and supporting change (Hopkins *et al.*, 1996, p. 48). The statements themselves are included as Appendix 8.

Respondents were asked to rate each statement 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often' or 'nearly always'. In administering this technique, I employed an infrared response system with a set of handsets and real-time interaction in order to give participants immediate feedback on the profile of responses from the staff as a whole. This was a departure from the usual written questionnaire style of data collection for this technique but anonymity was preserved and the activity was more engaging and enjoyable in this format. Unfortunately, through using this system, responses were not categorised as support staff, teacher, governor or management team member. Furthermore, a potential disadvantage of this method of data collection is that respondents may be influenced by the profile of responses to previous questions. This disadvantage had to be balanced against the benefit of using the technology to demonstrate that the data were being collected in a transparent way, eliminating the potential for 'cooking the

books', and hence giving participants more faith in the process. Arguably, increasing the level of trust that respondents have in the data collection and analysis process increases the likelihood that they will engage fully and give authentic responses. However, to complicate matters further, by engendering trust in this way tacit influence may be being brought to bear (with resulting bias), as 'openness' and 'honesty', characteristics of the procedure of data collection and presentation, are also issues of substantive interest to the area being researched. My final appraisal was that the variety of methods of data collection was helpful motivationally (in itself a factor that reduces bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 116)) and that I would need to be cautious in my interpretation of data.

A simple analysis (by key condition) was produced, showing the proportion of each of the four judgements ('rarely', 'sometimes' etc.) and this highlighted where the School seemed to be meeting the key indicators and where there might be areas for development. This was supplemented by an analysis by individual statement. In accordance with IQEA practice (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994), by applying Likert-scale (Likert, 1932) ratings to the four response types ('rarely' = 1; 'sometimes' = 2; 'often' = 3; 'nearly always' = 4), a mean score was calculated for responses against each statement. Furthermore, as a profile of results was available from 29 schools who had worked as part of the IQEA network (*ibid.*), it was possible to compare this more detailed profile of responses with summary data from this population.

In summary, on consideration of the case study as a whole, the combination of face-to-face interviews, questionnaires and documentary analysis strengthens the trustworthiness of the research design. The issues with which I am concerned are not often subject to rigorous examination in their professional context and this enhances the worth of the inquiry. The IQEA resources, in particular, make an important, distinctive contribution in the attempt to

‘excavate the nature of the obvious, and hence the nature of what is potentially both problematic and exciting’ (Fielding, 1997, p. 17).

The next chapter presents an analysis of the data generated by this battery of research techniques and provides a discussion of this analysis in relation to the conceptual framework provided by the literature review.

4. Analysis and discussion

In this chapter, the data relevant to an exploration of each of the research questions are presented, analysed and discussed. Rather than separating ‘analysis’ and ‘discussion’, data presentation and interpretation have been integrated into a continuous commentary for each of the research questions in the belief that this improves the readability of this chapter.

To begin, there is an examination of views on strategy development. This is followed by an analysis of perspectives on the school development planning process (prefaced by an examination of salient documentary evidence). The chapter then investigates the School’s culture, social structures and capacity for improvement. Finally, the key findings are summarised in the concluding section.

Strategy and strategy development

This section of the analysis was informed by the cross-sectional sample of interviews with staff and governors in different roles in the management hierarchy.

i. How do the Head and Chair of Governors conceptualise strategy and the way that strategy develops in the School; and how do these views compare with the perspectives of other members of staff?

The Head’s perspective on strategy development was largely representative of the planning school (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998). In his view, in order to sustain a sense of direction, the top management needs to commit itself to a course of

action and build its actions around some core priorities. He was critical (explicitly) of logical incremental approaches (Quinn, 1978; Johnson and Scholes, 1993), describing them as 'thinking on the hoof'. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that strategy needed to be re-examined in the light of changing circumstances.

In view of the rapidly changing environment in which decisions are made, the Head argued for the retention of a three-year rather than a five-year strategy. He argued that the School's focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning would transcend any potential change in strategic priorities at the end of the three-year period and that the change in strategy would be reflected in each constituent school improvement plan through an emphasis on different aspects of the practice of teaching and the curriculum. The distinctiveness of this three-year strategy, from the Head's perspective, is represented by the key aim to uplift a specific measure of student attainment (the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades). This, he argues, influences the priorities that are embedded in the School's approach.

For the Head: '... the three-year strategy is focused on outcomes; the time-span is a discipline'. The school development plan was considered 'more of a plan than a strategy'. Its content and presentation were influenced by its status as a public document and there were issues of concern of a sensitive nature that were not featured in the plan. In these terms, the School's strategy for improvement is deliberately partially concealed from its core staff. This is a model that is firmly situated in the design school (Mintzberg *et al.*, *op cit.*). The document that is developed and shared with the staff team summarises the 'ground level' actions to be implemented – the contribution they are expected to make. From this perspective, the overall direction of the school and its relationship with its environment are essentially the province of the governing body and senior team: a 'command and control' operational design (Hayes, 1985). Strategy, quite correctly, is conceived to provide a fit between external

opportunity and internal capability. However, this model of strategy formation, with the head (or wider top management) as strategist, does not accommodate the perspectives of the wider team of staff and other stakeholders. For as long as it is conceived that the staff team share a *plan* and top management create a *strategy*, there will be a separation that restricts the School's ability to learn its way forward.

The Chair of Governors considered that the process of strategic management needed to be rationalised in line with the formal lines of accountability. He considered that, partly through the disconnected nature of their sub-committees, governing bodies (this school included) were often 'outside the loop' of strategic decision-making in schools. He had recently introduced a committee structure that includes a Strategy Committee, comprising the Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors, the Headteacher and the chairs of each of the three other committees ('Teaching and Learning', 'Staffing' and 'Finance'). The principal responsibility of the Strategy Committee would be to develop strategy. The Chair intends the Strategy Committee to drive the agenda for the meetings of the full Governing Body. The new structure had been designed for a more strategic approach to governance and to allow a proper opportunity to discuss the strategic proposals put forward by the committees. The Chair's recognition that governing bodies are often insufficiently involved in strategy formation is well supported by the research on school governance (Martin & Bullock, 1997; Cuckle *et al.*, 1998). However, it is interesting that his prescription for greater effectiveness involved a structural change to the Governing Body's committee structure: an attempt to improve the rationality of the relationship between the Governing Body and the staff team through a change in the formal organisational design. Both the Chair and the Head shared an overtly bureaucratic, systemic perspective on the process of strategy formation, i.e. top management exercise their responsibilities by giving the School direction and drawing up deliberate strategy. The Chair of Governors had an expectation that the SMT would be closely involved in this formulation

of the central strategy for school improvement. His understanding was that strategy had been developed by the Head and senior team. A potential consequence of greater governor involvement could be that, by moving the locus of control further up the hierarchy of the School's organisational structure, colleagues on the staff in general could be further distanced from the process.

In addition to the Head and Chair of Governors, four other staff offered opinions on strategy and its development. On the School's three-year strategy, the head of year commented that in three years a great deal changes, especially given the very turbulent context of modern day schooling. Equally though, she considered that 'it makes sense to have some planning and a longer perspective' noting that, financially, three years are needed for effective implementation. The Learning Support Systems (ICT) Manager concurred:

I think it's only sensible to have a three-year plan because, to have a serious impact, it's going to take that sort of length of time.

The Bursar saw advantages in a longer time-scale:

I think one year is not enough, obviously, but five years is probably as far as we could possibly go... From my personal responsibilities' point of view, I think three years is an absolute minimum. You really possibly need to have an outline strategy for years four and five as well.

Consistent with the principles of strategic intent (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989; Davies and Ellison, 1997), he further argued for a review of strategic positioning on an annual basis:

...changes in Government policy... changes in various things from outside have a big impact on this... even your educational programmes... and I would suggest that... by the time you get to the end of it... you're not in the same world at all.

The Bursar reflected that, other than in times of sharply discontinuous change, the best one can do is to develop an orientation to strategy that accommodates its changing dynamic:

I think as the year unfolds, if you like, individual meetings and individual changes don't necessarily have to be floated up through the plan, but maybe that's when you have this sense about looking back. Looking back we thought this, but in practice we've done that. It should tie together, mostly, shouldn't it? I think if there were a major external change, which forces a redraft, you'd have to do it.

This recognition of emergent strategy (Mintzberg, 1994) was borne of a frame of reference that had been developed, of necessity, through the experience of adjusting budgets in the light of unanticipated developments and changing priorities.

From a cultural and political perspective (Johnson and Scholes, 1993), the head of faculty argued (cautiously) for greater staff involvement in the decisions regarding areas of strategic focus for the next three-year strategy. She outlined an advantage of this approach:

... I'm not saying that staff don't work with this, because they do, but maybe it would bring people on line... more on line, especially if you've got new staff... of them having some involvement and ownership over the document...

A more collaborative approach, then, is sought. It was interesting how cautiously this point was made. This may be a function of a dominant 'command and control' paradigm, reactivity to the interviewer, or both (the two, of course, are not necessarily mutually exclusive).

The account provides complex and contradictory perspectives. From a planning view perspective, there is a need for clear committed intent, the reinforcement of formal systems of accountability and rational systems of resource allocation. However, there was also recognition of the need for flexibility of thought and action in the context of environmental changes. Support was also expressed for the greater involvement of both teachers and governors in the framing of strategic priorities. Perspectives on the school development planning process are examined in the next section.

The school development plan: its role in the development and implementation of strategy

The evidence for this section of the chapter is also drawn from the interviews with the sample of staff and governors. Views on the following issues are examined: the form of the school development plan (or school improvement plan, as it is referred to in the School) and the involvement of colleagues in its construction; the way that resources are allocated to support the plan; and the impact that the plan has on practice. However, as school development planning is a formalised process, where practice and documentation will vary from school to school (Glover *et al.*, 1996; Bennett *et al.*, 2000), some contextual detail about the process in this school has been included. This frames the discussions that follow and aims to help the reader to judge the fittingness (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) of the study with other contexts.

Context: the formal process through which a school development plan is developed in the School

This commentary summarises the process (as documented) through which each school improvement plan is written and the characteristics of the documentation produced. A formal context is thereby provided for the interpretation of staff perspectives on the process as they experience it.

The 2000/01 school improvement plan (SIP) begins with a foreword (included as Appendix 9) written by the Head. This identifies both the time-period for the plan (1/4/00 to 31/8/01) and the period of time over which 'a wider strategy of improvement' is to take place - 'a period of three years and one term, from 1st April 2000 to 31st August 2003'. It then lists the contents of the plan, namely: report of progress against Ofsted action plan; outline of planning process; constituent action plans; and financial summaries.

The plan outlines the process through which the three-year strategy was developed, stressing the involvement of all classroom-based staff and members of the Governing Body; non-teaching staff were not involved. The process is described as follows:

A staff meeting in October was used to identify the main areas for school improvement. An SMT planning day in November highlighted five main areas of focus for this improvement (*these are listed*). These formed the focus for a two-day conference for all teaching staff in January. Following the conference an action plan was developed for each of the five issues identified.

So there was a degree of staff involvement in the process of strategy creation, but this participation was largely constrained within a systemic framework that preceded implementation. Strategy development, in this paradigm, is a

precursor to strategy implementation. This, again, is a design school approach: the separation of thinking from acting.

Five main areas of 'focus for improvement' are identified in the introductory section of the school improvement plan (SIP) 2000-2001, namely:

- a) curriculum design;
- b) quality of teaching;
- c) management responsibilities;
- d) pupil support systems;
- e) learning structure.

It is noted that a), b) and d) are integral to the main content of the school improvement plan but c) and e) have been addressed through other means. For c), line management structures and job descriptions have been revised and some new posts have been created to reflect a strong focus on the quality of teaching and learning and professional development. e) has resulted in a new pattern to the school day.

The 2001/02 SIP runs from 1/4/01 to 31/8/02. In comparison with the SIP for 2000/01, only minor changes to the format and organisation had been made. The Head's foreword begins with a statement about *Kaizen*², stressing the need for a process of 'continuous improvement' in the School that involves everyone. The criteria against which he wished the plan to be judged are presented as:

- its clarity and simplicity;
- the extent to which it is a 'working document', especially through its use in formal meetings;

² A Japanese change management approach with the principal aim of continuous improvement. (Imai, 1998)

- the involvement of staff in its creation; and
- the transparency of the link between the targets set and the resources allocated.

These criteria are a good match to the research questions set for this area of the study. A deliberate decision was not made for this match to be so close, but this cannot be considered a coincidence as my own mental models are likely to have been influenced by, and had some influence over, the Head's thinking in this area, through our working relationship.

Under 'Progress Made', the relationship between this plan and the three-year strategy is explained:

Last year's plan was the first of a new style improvement plan that contributes to focussed aims over a three-year period. The underlying aim of the three-year strategy is to raise levels of achievement and attainment with a particular emphasis on GCSE.

In non-specific terms the progress made against this 'underlying aim' is then noted briefly:

Levels of achievement at GCSE and at 'A' Level did rise significantly last year.

Within this section, there is a commentary on the whole-school initiatives, consistent with the 'focussed aims' that were introduced over the period of the last year's plan. In particular, the involvement of non-teaching staff in the process of writing action plans is highlighted as having been introduced for this year's SIP. Finally, a paragraph is included noting the introduction of the School's new system of performance management, its own interpretation of a statutory government policy. There is, however, no indication of the

relationship between this process and the school development planning process itself.

Under 'Looking Ahead', the Head goes on to explain how this SIP 'continues to develop the three areas of the quality of teaching, the quality of learning and the quality of pupil support'. A brief indication is given of how these areas had been re-interpreted for this plan. Interestingly, he continues this section by stating that '(these) key strands are supported by two further continuing developments: creativity and ICT'. This is a recognition of areas of strategic development that had not previously been explicitly stated as 'focussed aims'. There is evidence here of strategy that is implicit and emergent, rather than explicit and deliberate. Neither of these areas is in conflict with the stated aims as the latter are broad enough to accommodate more specific strategies for improvement. However, it is unclear how these specific issues attained pre-eminence over other competing emergent developments – an observation with political significance.

The main body of the SIP comprises approximately 30 action plans. These are of two types: 'key issue/non-subject' action plans and 'subject team' action plans. The former type includes the whole-school 'quality of teaching', 'curriculum planning' and 'pupil support' plans and also the plans written by year teams and non-teaching staff. Common to the format of both types of plan are the following sections:

- summary evaluation: progress made against targets for '01/'02;
- agreed targets for '01/'02;
- action to be taken (including schedule for implementation);
- means of monitoring and evaluating progress against targets;
- performance indicators.

These are all features of the school development planning model recommended by Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) and Hopkins *et al.* (1994). Resource allocation is notable by its absence from this list, but this is incorporated into the overall plan in a different way (discussed below). Therefore, there are no key characteristics of this model that have been overlooked in the format of the School's documentation.

The final section of the SIP comprises three documents. There is a summary of the basic funds devolved to subject teams through formula allocation and two separate summaries of the funds allocated to support the resource and training requirements of elements of the action plans.

In the guidance documentation (written for colleagues with the responsibility for writing an action plan), the school improvement planning process is described by a cyclical flow chart (Appendix 10). A process of strategic planning (incorporating staff involvement through the staff conference and SMT evaluation of their own 'key issue' action plans) leads to a generation or reappraisal of 'overall aims and objectives'. Specific draft action plans are then written by colleagues with responsibility for the management of other key issues and the work of subject teams. Separate resource plans and training plans are produced by these colleagues to quantify the cost of implementing the listed actions. Each action plan (and the attached costings) is then moderated by the Head or one of the two deputies and, following this moderation meeting, required adjustments are made to produce a revised version. Two budgets are set by the Head - for expenditure on teaching and learning resources and for training. The deputy heads are given responsibility for managing those budgets. They inspect draft action plans and make decisions over which items to support within these budgetary constraints. Colleagues are then informed of the extent to which their spending plans have been supported and they then produce their revised action plans on this basis.

The flowchart then illustrates that progress is monitored against the targets set and indicates that this influences the wider strategic planning process.

The role of the Governing Body in the process is exposed, through the schedule for SIP completion, as a marginal one. The two deputy heads were scheduled to present their whole-school 'Quality of Teaching' and 'Quality of Learning' action plans to the Teaching and Learning Committee on the day before these plans were to be presented to the staff by members of the SMT. (These plans were presented to staff in order to inform them of key priorities, so that other action plans would be written to be consistent with these goals.) There had been no earlier opportunity created for the governors to consider the priorities for the next SIP. Strategy had been reinterpreted, therefore, without their involvement, 'consultation' being, in reality, a process whereby governors were informed of the priorities for the plan. This exclusion from the development planning process is consistent with the findings of Martin and Bullock (1997).

Having considered the features of the documentation regarding the school development plan and the development planning process, the remainder of this section of the chapter examines the views of those involved on these issues. This begins with the form of the plan itself and the degree to which the interviewees were involved in the development planning process.

ii. How do the School's staff and governors view the form of the school development plan and their involvement in its construction?

Perspectives on the school development planning process were extremely variable. The governor and Chair of Governors differed in their perspectives on governor involvement, the former being of the opinion that teachers, as professionals, should decide what should be in the plan. Governors, she felt,

had a monitoring role, asking questions and checking on progress. The Chair, in contrast, felt that the Governing Body should play a central role in creating the foundations for the plan. This variation in perspective within a governing body is not unusual (Cuckle *et al.*, 1998), but indicates that the Governing Body as a team may, to a degree, lack clarity of role and purpose. At senior and middle management level, the basic premises were supported, with some suggestions made on how the process could be improved. Further down the formal hierarchy, frames of reference were less accommodating of the strategic planning paradigm.

There was a common failure to recognise the plan as part of a three-year strategy. Although this is articulated in the preface to each of the last two plans, this seems to suggest a disjunction in the relationship between the strategy and the annual development plans, a common criticism ('confusion') of the planning view of strategy formation (Johnson & Scholes, 1993). Regardless of opinion on the process, the format of the individual action plans was generally considered concise and practically orientated.

The head of faculty interviewed reflected that the school improvement planning process suited her well:

... it's important that everyone appreciates where the School's going and what the School's aims are, and that ought to be reflected in your improvement programme... plan... so that we're all pulling in the same direction.

She did not feel constrained by the strategic framework within which she operated and found the target setting and review process useful:

I see it as very much a chance to evaluate where you've gone throughout a year and say 'Right, O.K., with that in mind, what are we going to do next year, as a faculty.'

The subject leader agreed that the process had given the School an 'improved sense of direction' and that it had been helpful to focus on a small number of areas. Nevertheless, she was uncomfortable with the bureaucracy of the plan's production, asking whether this might not simply be a 'paper exercise'. A further issue raised was the difficulty, from her perspective, of having to limit the scope of her targets to a one-year time period. She would have liked the opportunity to set targets over a longer time-scale and, where possible, receive advance funding in order to do this. I sensed some ambivalence over the standardised structure of the action plans (requiring that targets be set to relate to the two strands of strategy) as she referred to her own ambitions for her subject area: 'Vision is good, but each subject area should have its own vision'. There is an issue of ownership here – again, an area of potential concern with a top-down systemic planning view of strategy development (Johnson & Scholes, *ibid.*).

The classroom teacher interviewed was primarily concerned to develop her own teaching and tended not to see beyond the priorities for her departmental team:

In my role, I don't necessarily need to have a whole school perspective... My perception is that different people in different levels of the hierarchy in the School have different perceptions of the improvement plan, inevitably, because the need for your focus stems ... as a (*subject*) teacher who doesn't have a lot of responsibility in the Department... is to do the teaching of your subject and then to review that at the end of the year and try to improve it for the next year.

The targets that had been set for the action plan for the teacher's department were 'things that we would be doing anyway', though she did not feel that this rendered the target-setting process redundant. She stressed the added focus that this collaborative activity gave to the intended actions. This is interesting as there is a type of implementation gap here (*ibid.*). This teacher was broadly uninterested in the School's improvement plan. She was also ambivalent about her involvement in the creation of her team's action plan, recognising the benefits of team work but not feeling that the direction of the team's improvement efforts fundamentally changed as a result of this process. From a learning school perspective, the SIP model needs to accommodate this teacher's desire to improve her teaching, helping her to develop her 'theories-in-use' (Senge, 1992). This seems to require a combination of greater involvement in the process through which key priorities are set and a flexibility to accommodate individual needs and aspirations that the current model does not have. In a well developed process, these two features would be closely inter-related. The challenge would be to ensure that these individual strategies were well coordinated, manageable, coherent and consonant with external developments (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998).

The exercise of writing an action plan was less well grounded for teams of non-teaching staff, as the prefaced focus of development for the year was not closely related to their job role. At the very least, a broad indication of how these teams could make an effective supporting contribution would have helped teams to feel more included in the improvement planning process and improved the relevance and potential value, within this process, of the action plans produced. Greater involvement in this process would have improved ownership and improved the connectivity between the plan and the real issues faced by these colleagues (Johnson and Scholes, *op cit.*).

In addition to the complexity regarding wider strategic management (discussed in the previous section), the views on the shorter term school improvement

planning process sketched a similarly ambiguous profile. Colleagues in more senior posts were generally unquestioning of the basic precepts of the rational planning paradigm, but interesting perspectives were gained from the core staff. The issues of involvement, ownership and motivation may be more significant and problematic than had previously been acknowledged by the management team. In particular, the relationship between targets set at whole-school, team and individual level merits a rigorous reappraisal. The linkage between the development planning process and the School's budgetary process is discussed in the next section.

iii. How do the staff judge the suitability of the process through which resources are allocated to support the school development plan?

On how the plan was resourced, the Head felt that it was best to 'keep the spirit of the current system' (a composite model of formula allocation and bids to support action plans). His analysis was that the difficulties faced by middle managers in making their budgets work were, in part, the result of insufficient analysis of alternative spending and purchasing options. When asked how well the School was able to operate strategically given the inflexibility of fixed budgets, he expressed concern over keeping substantial contingencies as he felt that the requests that would follow could create micropolitical difficulties: 'grace and favour' as he put it. This potential leverage, or micropolitical agency, is rejected then. Consequently, by following a rational, systemic process of resource allocation, the formal strategic planning paradigm is reinforced (Simkins, 1998). A small budget is allocated to the Deputy Head (Quality of Learning) to prompt, promote and support initiatives pro-actively, but this is a small percentage of the total budget devolved.

The deputy head agreed with the Head that the plan was resourced in an appropriate way with a contingency and some flexible budget management,

although funds were in short supply. The Head gave an example of an initiative that had not been included in the school improvement plan, and had no budget to support it, but was considered a very high priority amongst the SMT. In this case (a programme to provide focused tutoring to an identified group of GCSE borderline C/D grade students) funds had been vired from a central budget that was under-spent. Without such an underspend, it may not have been possible to support this emergent priority. The corollary to this explanation is that it is desirable that all the good ideas are conceived before budgets are constructed as part of the operational cycle - a static model for a dynamic world?

The subject leader was particularly concerned over the time that she felt she had wasted listing suggested actions in priority order and costing these out to find that, in the light of the funds that were subsequently allocated, the great majority of her planned initiatives were not feasible. She felt that some guidelines, outlining the parameters within which bids for funds should lie, were needed to avoid further frustration and wasted efforts. This seems reasonable, though it reduces the flexibility of resource allocation within the overall budget that has been fixed to support action plans. Busher (2001) notes that subject leaders will often over-bid in order to exert pressure on senior managers in order that, when scaled down, an inflated bid might well match expectations, or else a process of bargaining will have been set up for any available contingency funds. Micropolitics is often in sharpest relief in matters of financial management. It would, of course, be easiest to distribute all of the available funds by formula allocation and this would prevent the situation described by the subject leader from occurring. This would increase flexibility for subject leaders but reduce flexibility for senior managers (Simkins, *op cit.*).

Both subject leaders and senior managers argue for a system of resource allocation that would allow them to operate with an appropriate degree of agency to provide opportunities, or directives, for staff to make a contribution

to the School's ongoing improvement efforts. The contrasting, but significant micropolitical difficulties that there are in both managing contingencies and administering fund allocation through rational bidding systems may merit further consideration.

The next section considers the perceived impact that the SIP has had on colleagues in the School, as explained in the sample interviews.

iv. How much reference do the staff and governors make to the school development plan and how do they feel that it affects practice?

The interview responses exposed a partial disengagement with the plan following its production. Colleagues representing a wide range of job roles in the School reported that the school improvement plan was not often used in team meetings. Although the value of the improvement planning process was acknowledged, the document itself had limited currency. On an individual basis, some colleagues found their copy of the SIP useful, whilst others, since its production, had not made any reference to it at all.

Within the SMT, the Head personally found the plan useful but felt that better use could be made in meetings, including SMT meetings. The deputy head explained that the plans were used regularly in his fortnightly meetings with faculty heads but also saw little evidence of their use in formal team meetings, other than around the time of their construction. He saw the merit in formally reviewing progress against targets on a more regular basis but was conscious of the extra time that this would take.

The senior teacher stressed the need to re-emphasise the strategy with new staff and was disappointed that: '... in practice, we don't use it collectively, examining each others' plans'. At middle manager level, the head of faculty

was a little embarrassed to admit that she made very little reference to the school improvement plan and the action plans written for her subject team. She had intended to feature an update on progress on each faculty meeting agenda but had found that other more pressing issues had blighted this intention. On inspection of the plans, she was able to confirm that appropriate progress had been made. On the few occasions that she said she did consult the document it was in order to: '...formalise really what we meant... what we said we were going to do. It's just to get things straight in my head.' It would seem that the school improvement planning process itself, and the subsequent agreed actions, guide the actions of this colleague implicitly, though she has little need to consult the document. Similarly, the head of year did not often, in practice, look back at the plan for her year team as she felt well enough acquainted with its content. In her faculty team, little use was made of the plan in meetings.

For the teacher and learning support assistant, the school improvement plan had not been a working document. The teacher reflected that her subject's action plan was not used by the departmental team and, in her judgement, not generally a working document for individuals in her team:

We don't ever look at it..... looking at the targets here, I think we should look at it more than we do... I suppose, to be totally honest, it might be to do with the idea that this is something we do at the beginning of every year... dare I say paper pushing, and although I can see the worth of it and I think it's important because it keeps a focus on what we're going to do, the actual use and value of it, on a day-to-day teaching basis, I suppose, might not be perceived as very valuable.... there's lots of short-term things that we need to address... things like this that are more long-term might get pushed to one side.

She felt, on reflection, that more use ought to be made of the plan in faculty and departmental meetings as, looking through the targets and actions, she

could identify areas that would have benefited from closer scrutiny. She argued for an increased emphasis on the role of each individual in contributing to these targets:

I think, with this sort of thing, that part of the problem might be to do with the ownership of it and, as a teacher, seeing the value of having this sort of plan, and so some way of making people interested and wanting to produce targets for themselves is a way of getting it to work...

Consistent with this perspective, the deputy head considered that the quality of monitoring could be improved by establishing a better relationship between the action planning process and the performance management process. In the latter system, individuals set targets for their own performance that are negotiated with their appraiser.

... the performance management (*targets*) are quite personal, aren't they? Err... personal to that individual, whereas the faculty ones are more general. I guess a lot of it's to do with the time as well, as the targets are set at different times of year. I think it would be better if the timings were closer together. One could inform the other then. I'm sure that there could be a closer link between what is a head of faculty's personal target for performance management and what are their improvement plans.

By emphasising the link that could be made between individuals' personal targets for improvement, a dynamic could be created that could lead to a greater feeling of involvement in, and responsibility for, a team's efforts to improve in directions that are negotiated on the basis of the team members' embodied knowledge and capacity to learn. This would require a clearer system for linking the two processes than is currently in place.

The Chair of Governors described how he felt that the Governing Body as a whole were not sufficiently informed of progress against the school improvement plan, as this responsibility was invested with the Teaching and Learning Committee and the minutes did not demonstrate sufficient questioning and analysis of progress made. Furthermore, papers prepared for this committee were not more widely available to the Governing Body.

In its current form, these observations must raise concerns over the value of the plan itself. One response would be to increase the formalisation of the monitoring process, but a greater scrutiny over deliberate strategy could be at the expense of the recognition of emergent strategy. Furthermore, 'top-down' models of implementation have often been found to be ineffective (e.g. Fullan, 1991; Andy Hargreaves, 1992). A more radical approach would be to reconceptualise the whole process of school improvement planning to relegate the importance, or revise the role, of the plan that is produced. This would be a challenge to the prevailing 'planning view' as supported by the Chair of Governors and the SMT. The teacher argued for a greater emphasis on individual priorities and this would be supported by a learning school philosophy that focused primarily on personal goals (Senge, 1992; Barth, 1990b; Angus, 1993). In such an approach, managers, at both middle and senior level, would work with these goals to facilitate departmental and organisational growth respectively. However, challenging the planning view is especially difficult in the context of governance, as deliberate, purposive plans provide a suitable framework for structured monitoring. A model would be needed that combined flexibility and potential for learning with a degree of permanence and control. Furthermore, governors and senior managers would need to be convinced of the legitimacy and value of the former, as well as the latter - a paradigm shift for many, perhaps.

The next section considers the contextual, organisational characteristics of the School's culture, social structures and capacity for development.

Culture, organisational structure and the capacity for change

The data for this section draws on the documentary analysis of the School's staff handbook, 'The School Management Scale' (ISEP questionnaire), the IQEA resources, the 'Organisational Design' questionnaire and (to a limited extent) the interviews. It is the set of research questions, rather than the battery of research techniques, that serves as the primary structuring device for this chapter. It is hoped that this focuses the reader's attention on the salient issues and provides for a more straightforward triangulation of evidence. The exploration begins with a consideration of views on the culture of the School.

v. How do the staff and governors describe the School's culture and how close are their descriptions of reality to their declared ideals?

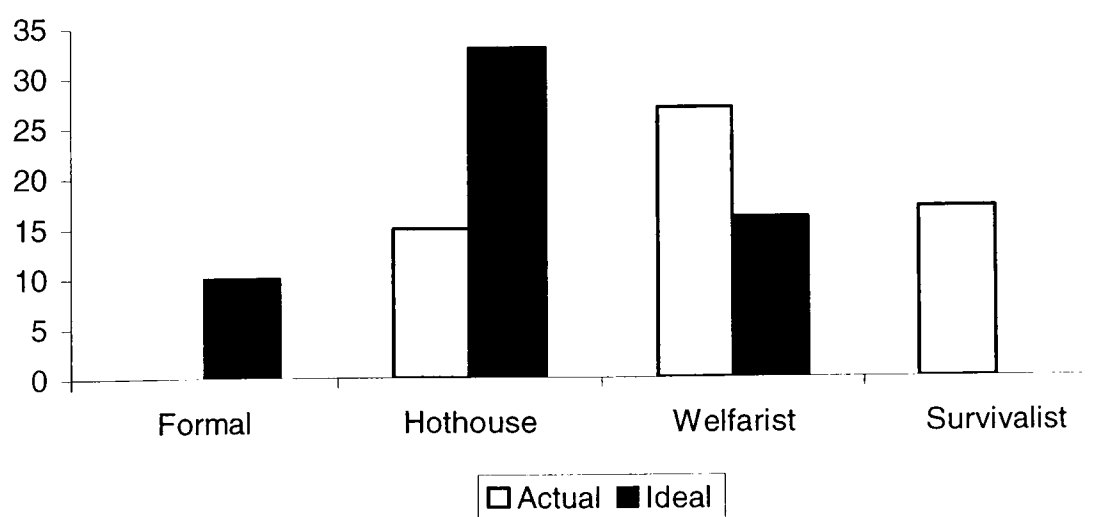
Through the use of the IQEA technique, 'The Culture of School' (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994), with all staff and a group of governors, it was possible to produce a profile of staff and governor perceptions of the School's culture. Furthermore, this could be compared with a map of the associated ideals of these stakeholders. As explained in Chapter 3 (pp. 115-119), for this technique participants plotted positions on a grid. The four corners of the grid each related to a culture type, which was characterised by a cameo description (Appendix 5).

The data are presented in Table 4.1, as an analysis by sub-group; the overall results are presented graphically by Chart 4.1.

Table 4.1 – Grid positions for ‘The Culture of the School’ (responses by sub-group)

<i>Quadrant</i>		<i>Supp. Staff</i>	<i>Teach.</i>	<i>SMT</i>	<i>Gov.</i>	<i>Total</i>
FORMAL (pink)	Actual	0	0	0	0	0
	Ideal	3	7	0	0	10
HOTHOUSE (green)	Actual	4	9	0	2	15
	Ideal	4	24	1	4	33
WELFARIST (yellow)	Actual	3	19	2	3	27
	Ideal	6	7	2	1	16
SURVIVALIST (blue)	Actual	6	10	1	0	17
	Ideal	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (Actual):		13	38	3	5	59
TOTAL (Ideal):		13	38	3	5	59
CENTRAL	Actual	3	15	2	2	22
	Ideal	2	14	0	1	17

Chart 4.1 – ‘The Culture of School’ (overall responses)



The clearest findings are that no one considers the School's culture to be 'formal' in nature and, unsurprisingly, no one considers the 'survivalist' culture their ideal. Overall, the culture that was considered the most representative of the School's existing culture related to the 'welfarist' culture. However, amongst the support staff the 'survivalist' option was most commonly chosen. The support staff had a tendency to be more extreme in their judgements plotting points nearer to the perimeter of the grid, as indicated by the relatively low proportion of selections in the central quadrant. It is interesting also that a member of the SMT marked a grid position in the 'survivalist' quadrant. A high proportion of teachers (63%) and governors (80%) plotted the School's ideal position in the 'hothouse' quadrant, although the 'welfarist' culture was more popular with support staff (46%) and SMT (67%). It is interesting that so many teaching staff perceive that the 'total institution' hothouse model is the model that would serve the School best. This may indicate a desire for higher expectations and standards, or else a belief that the School needs to continue to innovate and experiment (Hargreaves, 1995). This would contrast with the traditionalist notions of grammar school education in the local area's selective system.

The next analysis (Table 4.2) was produced to indicate the relationship between staff and governor perceptions of the actual culture of the School as compared with their ideal culture for the School *for each individual*. In this analysis, a distinction is made between positions on the grid that were in the 'moderate' section of each quadrant and those that were in the more 'extreme' region. This gives the analysis a little more detail than by simply using the quadrants as referents.

Table 4.2 – ‘The Culture of School’: match between perceptions of the School’s actual and ideal cultures (all respondents)

			IDEAL CULTURE							
			Formal (Pink)		Hothouse (Green)		Welfarist (Yellow)		Survivalist (Blue)	
			E	M	E	M	E	M	E	M
ACTUAL CULTURE	Formal (Pink)	Extreme	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Moderate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Total	0		0		0		0	
	Hothouse (Green)	Extreme	0	0	2	5	2	0	0	0
		Moderate	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	0
		Total	0		12		3		0	
	Welfarist (Yellow)	Extreme	2	0	5	4	5	0	0	0
		Moderate	2	1	4	1	3	0	0	0
		Total	5		14		8		0	
	Survivalist (Blue)	Extreme	2	1	2	4	2	1	0	0
		Moderate	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
		Total	5		7		5		0	

(n = 59)

Key: E = Extreme; M = Moderate

It seems that those colleagues who consider that the School is best described by the ‘hothouse’ culture would prefer the School to stay that way. When describing an ideal culture for the School, more extreme quadrant positions are taken in the ‘welfarist’ and ‘formal’ quadrants than in the ‘hothouse’ area. Perhaps this is not surprising as, in a sense, the welfarist and formal cultures are more authentic choices, between a primary concern for expressive-social cohesion or instrumental-social control respectively.

The next analysis (Table 4.3) indicates the directions that the respondents considered gave the best representation of their perception of the direction in which the School's culture was moving (with regard to the grid).

Table 4.3 – Perceived directions for 'The Culture of School' (all respondents)

	Towards quadrant listed below:			
From quadrant listed below:	FORMAL (pink)	HOTHOUSE (green)	WELFARIST (yellow)	SURVIVALIST (blue)
FORMAL (pink)	0	0	0	0
HOTHOUSE (green)	3	4	6	2
WELFARIST (yellow)	3	19	6	2
SURVIVALIST (blue)	0	10	2	1
TOTAL:	6	33	14	5
CENTRAL	0	12	7	4

(n = 58)³

It is striking that a large proportion of respondents believed that the School was moving towards a more 'hothouse' culture, in line with the aspirations of many. Furthermore, few colleagues indicated that the School was becoming increasingly 'survivalist'. On the whole, for this analysis it could be concluded (tentatively) that the staff and governors of the School are concerned to retain a strong concern with the social integration and cohesion of the staff team, whilst continuing to raise expectations of the performance of both students and staff and find creative, innovative ways to envision the School's future.

³ One of the 59 participants failed to mark an arrow to indicate a direction

Comments made about the School's culture through open responses on the 'Organisational Design' questionnaire and through interviews with staff were positive. The culture was described as 'friendly', 'open', 'cooperative' and 'a nurturing environment'. The Head asserted that he wished the School to become a supportive culture that encourages innovation and creativity. The head of year concurred, reflecting that an unprecedented level of opportunities had already been opened up for staff in the last two years, through professional development and new positions of responsibility. However, one teacher moderated his support for this cultural shift, considering that the strategies would not be vindicated until the students' responses were congruent with the effort expended.

I personally feel that the SMT and staff have a distinct desire to change the culture of the School to one of success and changes are happening all the time to promote this. The difficulty is in getting the pupils to want the success and actively seek it – I feel that the culture still has not changed and that there is the constant resistance from the pupils.

The rating of 2.8⁴ for statement 17 of 'The School Management Scale' ('The SMT openly recognises teachers when they do things well') indicates that the senior management team are generally perceived by teaching staff to give proper recognition for the efforts of staff members. However, in response to the 'Organisational Design' questionnaire, a more complex profile of opinion emerges. The questionnaire asked the staff: For which qualities, attributes or achievements: a) are staff rewarded in this school? and b) ought staff to be rewarded in this school?

Table 4.4 shows the types of response to this question made by colleagues in their various job roles; Chart 4.2 summarises the overall responses in terms of categories that emerged through inspection of the types of response.

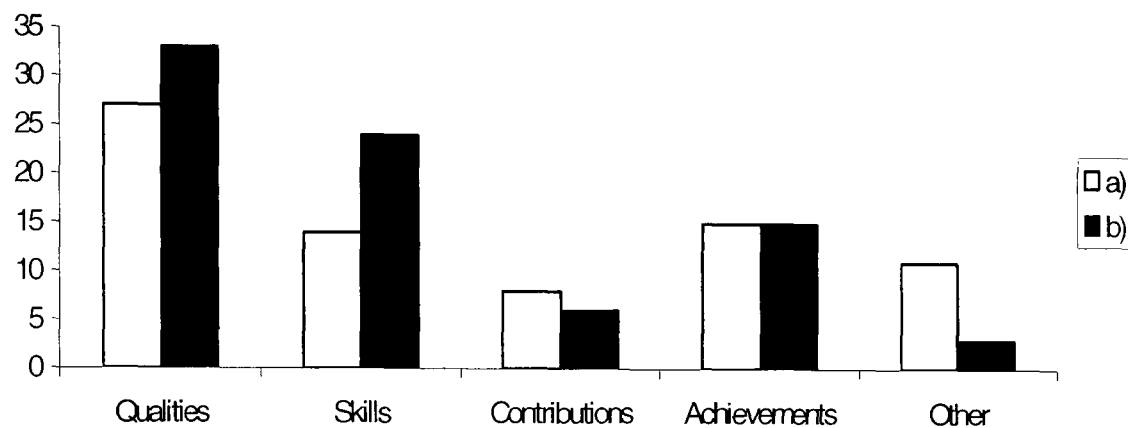
⁴ 0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Uncertain, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree

Table 4.4 – ‘Organisational Design’: rewards (responses by job role)

Response	Teach		Subj Lead		HOF/ HOY		SMT		Learn Supp		Non- teach		Total	
	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b
QUALITIES	11	11	2	4	4	6	4	6	0	0	6	6	27	33
Vision/innovation	4	3	0	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	8	6
Commitment/hard work	5	3	1	2	0	3	2	2	0	0	3	2	11	12
Assertiveness	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Resilience/flexibility	1	3	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	2	5	7
Consistency/reliability	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Loyalty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Professionalism	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
SKILLS	5	6	2	3	2	5	3	4	1	1	1	5	14	24
Good practice (general)	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	4
Teaching	2	3	0	0	2	3	2	2	0	0	0	1	6	9
Relationships/discipline	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	5
Coaching/mentoring	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Writing reports	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Management	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
Administration	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
CONTRIBUTIONS	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	8	6
Related to job description	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Extra-curricular/trips	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	4	4
Specific events/activities	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1
ACHIEVEMENTS	0	1	1	3	2	2	3	2	6	6	3	1	15	15
Individual prof dev	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	4	4	3	0	9	6
Exam results/pupil prog	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0	0	6	7
Personal targets	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
OTHER	0	0	4	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	4	1	11	3
Long service/experience	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	5	2
Specific skills in shortage areas (recruitment/retn)	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	1
Serendipity*	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	17	19	11	14	13	15	12	12	7	7	15	14	75	81
No. of respondents	6		4		6		4		3		8		31	

Chart 4.2 – ‘Organisational Design’: rewards (overall responses)

(a – For what are staff rewarded?; b – For what ought staff to be rewarded?)



With the exception of the final ‘other’ category, the types of actions, achievements and attributes that were perceived to be rewarded are contingent (rather than non-contingent) rewards, i.e. they all have a relationship to individual task performance, rather than, e.g., being driven by external factors such as the job market. Chart 4.2 indicates that non-contingent rewards, such as recruitment and retention allowances, are recognised as being used in the School as incentives but are not so readily accepted by individuals themselves. The asterisked ‘serendipity’ category refers to the response of a middle manager, who considered that staff are rewarded for:

(Being the) ...best match fit to meeting new developments.

Management skills are not well represented in the responses and it is interesting to note that despite the School’s focus on improving the quality of teaching, the data indicate that good practice could be rewarded more effectively than at present.

Commitment, hard work and perseverance were most commonly identified, both as being rewarded and as being most worthy of reward. However, Table 4.4 shows that the middle managers in the sample were, relative to their own

hierarchy of importance, less convinced that (their?) hard work was being recognised. Is this a symptom of a stratum of the organisational structure that is under the most pressure? Also, it could be inferred from the responses of the non-teaching staff that some of them feel that their work-related skills are insufficiently recognised. In both cases the findings can only be tentative given the small numbers involved. All learning support assistants have been supported with accredited job-related training from induction and it is therefore not surprising that they recognise the value that is placed on continuous professional development in the School.

There was wide acknowledgement of the ambition and commitment of the senior management team for the School's improvement and recognition of the opportunities that had been created for staff in this context. However, some colleagues felt that the collegiality of the School's culture was being compromised by a system of rewards that gave recognition, both financial and symbolic, to a small number of colleagues. These colleagues were considered to be highly thought of by the Head and deputies and it seemed that opportunities had been created expressly for them, in order to provide incentives for them to stay at the School. The head of faculty interviewed believed that some staff had the impression that the head was effectively 'held to ransom' by specific colleagues threatening to leave if their job role and conditions of service did not change. The conception that some colleagues seemed to have of this issue may have been fuelled by a lack of timely communication, on occasions, of how and why posts had been created and points of responsibility awarded. Two colleagues perceived an inequity that was detrimental to the staff team's morale when colleagues who taught subjects that were subject to a recruitment crisis were awarded non-contingent retention points. Equity is an important hygiene factor, a *dissatisfier* that reduces job satisfaction when it is absent (Handy, 1993). In times of teacher shortage, there is a market-enforced pressure to keep staff in particular posts. Nevertheless, an understanding of the influence of such measures on the

motivation of others in the school can, at least, help such issues to be handled with sensitivity.

A further criticism that was made (of the senior team) was that the most visible, novel accomplishments were the ones that were rewarded most frequently. There was a surprising strength of feeling that emerged from both the questionnaires and the interviews to suggest that the School's implicit reward systems needed to be revised to give greater value to consistency of performance and dependability. The importance of reward systems in raising levels of motivation and (indirectly) morale are stressed in the human resource management research, both in education and more widely. Interestingly, Katz and Kahn (1978) argue that organisations need people who:

- i) are attracted to staying in an organisation as well as initially joining it;
- ii) perform their tasks in a dependable manner;
- iii) go beyond this to engage in some type of creative, spontaneous and innovative behaviour.

From the perspectives of some colleagues, the implicit reward systems had been loaded in favour of iii), at the expense of i) and ii).

The School's culture cannot be satisfactorily described in a concluding paragraph. The data is insufficient as there would be a number of sub-cultures based around teams and informal groupings (McMahon, 2001). Moreover, the complexity of the data that is available, through this analysis, is challenging in itself. However, there seem to be some patterns that emerge. The School as a community does not have a traditional self-image and, on the whole, has no such aspirations. It values the importance of supportive relationships between staff and is reluctant to relinquish this characteristic, though there is an ambition to improve educational outcomes. There are some uncomfortable issues of equity and, although staff generally feel valued by the SMT, some

feel that their consistent efforts are overlooked. In the next section, a more detailed analysis of the social structures underpinning the School's culture is gained from the perspectives of the staff and governors.

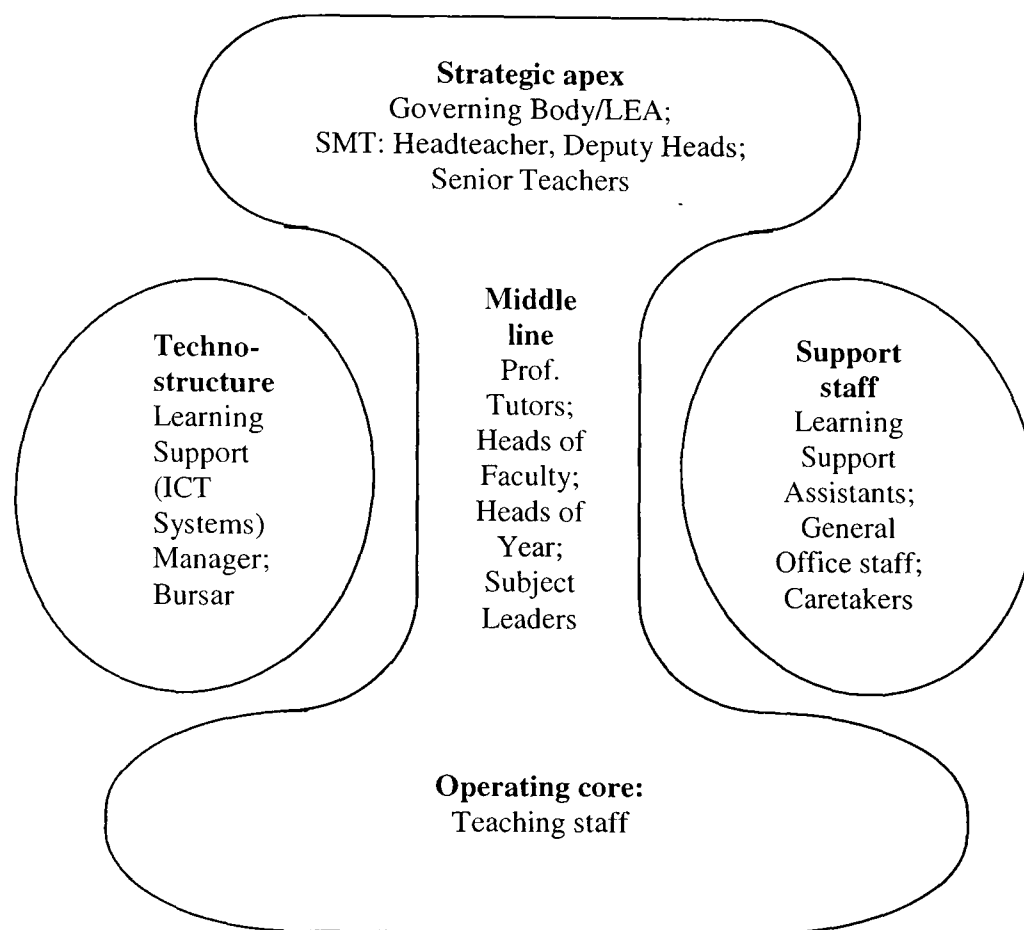
vi. What are staff and governor perceptions of the School's organisational structure and how do these perceptions compare with their own preferences for organisational structure?

Organisational structure, or design, can be considered both as a formal functional framework of responsibility and accountability and also as a composite collection of social structures (Johnson and Scholes, 1993). This section of the study begins with a description of the School's formal organisational configuration, as this is considered to provide a context for the analysis and discussion of staff views related to the social structures.

Context: formal organisational structure

The School's formal organisational structure can be represented using Mintzberg's 'basic building blocks of organisational design' (Mintzberg, 1979). This is shown in Diagram 4.1 and is derived from the organisation charts that are included in the School's staff handbook.

Diagram 4.1 – The School’s organisational structure



The Governing Body has the legal responsibility for reviewing the School’s aims, ensuring that public finances are used efficiently and effectively to support these aims, monitoring the curriculum and quality of teaching in the School and ensuring that key policies are in place and are regularly reviewed (DfEE, 2000). The School’s general management and leadership are delegated to the Headteacher, who is supported by two deputy headteachers: the Deputy Head (Quality of Teaching) and the Deputy Head (Quality of Learning). Over the period of the research, there were two further members of the Senior Management Team (SMT): the Senior Teacher (Pupil Support) and the Head of Sixth Form.

The School is organised as a matrix structure, with subject teams and year teams defining the axes of the matrix. There are, therefore, two types of middle

manager: subject leaders and year heads. Furthermore, subjects are grouped into eight faculties, each of which has a head of faculty. Two of the heads of faculty are professional tutors, having further responsibilities for the support and professional development of newly qualified teachers and student teachers respectively.

The *operating core*, in Diagram 4.1, refers to the teaching staff, both qualified and non-qualified. Staff in the *strategic apex* and the *middle line* also have teaching responsibilities and are also, therefore, part of the *operating core*.

The *technostructure* in the School comprises the Learning Support Systems (ICT) Manager and the Bursar. The former has the key responsibility of managing the School's ICT infrastructure and developing further the systems for monitoring and evaluating each individual pupil's progress through developing the School's information systems. The latter, through the creation and reconciliation of budgets, also designs systems to control the work of others.

The *support staff* include:

- general office staff with clerical and administrative duties;
- caretaking staff;
- technician staff;
- midday supervisory staff, who ensure the welfare of pupils during the lunch break;
- catering and cleaning staff (from September 2001, when these staff were, for the first time, employed directly by the School).

Learning support assistants (LSAs), who provide extra support for pupils with learning difficulties, are both *support staff* and part of the *operating core*. Their job descriptions include administrative duties but they also have a direct

influence on the learning of pupils. In the organisation charts found in the School's staff handbook, the LSAs are featured in the version for teaching staff.

The School's clearly defined hierarchy hides the complexity of the social structures that govern the reality of its operation. Five of these social structures are examined in the remainder of this section.

Social structures

Hargreaves (1995) postulates a model of five social structures (*political, micropolitical, maintenance, development and service*) that underpin a school's culture. There are tensions between these social structures, so that changes in one structure can result in reciprocally related changes in another structure. Furthermore, there is no universally agreed set of social structures (Hargreaves argues that a moral structure may be apposite) and neither is there complete agreement on the nature of the tensions between them (*ibid.*).

However, Hargreaves' model of social structures seems to stand alone in the areas of school improvement and effectiveness, as an analytical device through which the tensions within, and between, informal organisational structures can be examined. The related IQEA technique 'The Structures of School' (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994) was therefore used for this focus of the inquiry. Data from the other questionnaires were also used to illustrate and strengthen claims to knowledge about the School's social structures.

'The Structures of School' questionnaire technique examines these five interrelated social structures. The *political* and *micropolitical* structures dictate the distribution of formal and informal power and authority and are closely linked. There is a further connection between the *maintenance* and *development* structures, as the former aims to keep order and predictability,

whereas the latter is designed for change. Finally, the *service* structure regulates the interface between the School and its community.

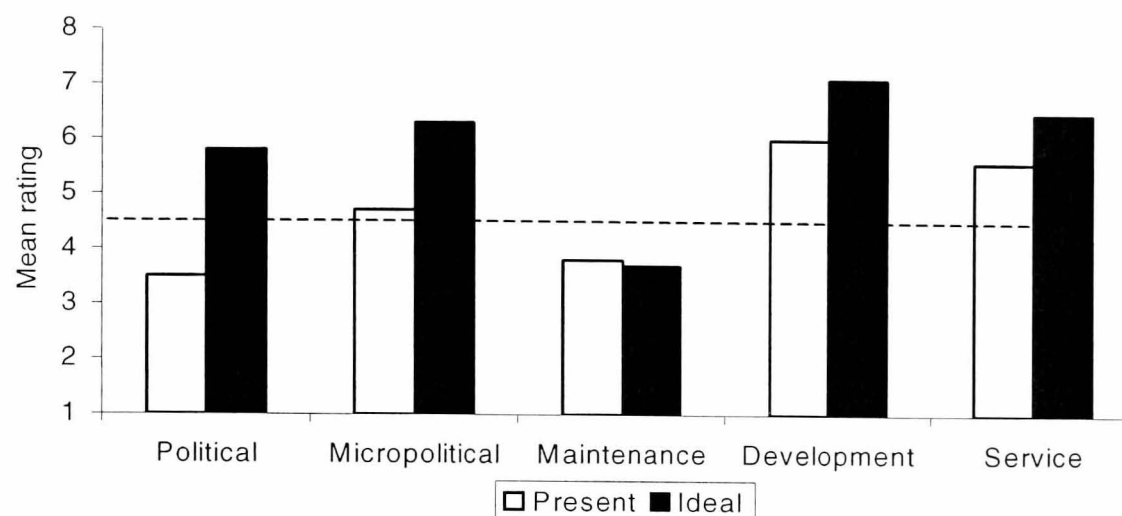
The structure-culture complexes, as described in Chapter 2 (pp. 81-84), are matched with the full set of questionnaire statements in Appendix 7. An example of a questionnaire sheet (relating to the political structure) for this technique is included as Appendix 6. For each of the five key social structures, respondents marked two positions: one indicating the present position of the School and another showing their ideal placement. In Table 4.5, the mean and standard deviation for the ratings are given, where a rating of 1 represents close agreement with the statement that is representative of a 'traditional' organisational culture and 8 is a match with the 'collegial' statement. The table analyses the data by sub-group; Chart 4.3 shows the overall data graphically. Each social structure is then examined in turn, with the responses from 'The Structures of School' being compared with data generated by the other research tools.

Table 4.5 – ‘The Structures of School’: social structures (responses by sub-group)

<i>Social Structures</i> ↓		<i>SMT</i>		<i>Other staff</i>		<i>Governors</i>		<i>Overall</i>	
		Mean	<i>S.D.</i>	Mean	<i>S.D.</i>	Mean	<i>S.D.</i>	Mean	<i>S.D.</i>
Political	✓	5.3	1.7	3.2	1.5	4.4	1.2	3.5	1.6
	*	5.7	1.7	5.8	1.6	5.5	1.5	5.8	1.6
Micropolitical	✓	6.0	0.8	4.6	1.5	4.4	1.0	4.7	1.4
	*	6.7	1.2	6.3	0.9	6.6	1.4	6.3	1.0
Maintenance	✓	2.7	0.5	3.9	1.5	3.5	2.1	3.8	1.5
	*	1.7	0.5	3.8	1.9	3.3	1.8	3.7	1.9
Development	✓	7.3	0.5	5.9	1.5	5.6	1.4	6.0	1.4
	*	8.0	0.0	7.0	0.8	7.0	1.1	7.1	0.9
Service	✓	6.7	1.2	5.5	1.3	6.0	1.7	5.6	1.3
	*	7.3	0.9	6.3	1.5	7.8	0.4	6.5	1.5

*Key: ✓ = present position; * = ideal position.*

Chart 4.3 – ‘The Structures of School’: social structures (overall responses)



Political structure

The IQEA technique exposed a perceived lack of collegiality in the School’s political structure. The level of dissatisfaction with this aspect of the functioning of the School was greater than for any of the other structures examined.

It is interesting to note that the profile of SMT responses (and, to a lesser extent, the governors’ responses) is not congruent with this overall finding. Although the SMT opinion on the ideal balance between traditional and collegial approaches was consistent with the staff as a whole, their perception of current reality is quite different. In comparison with the staff as a whole, the SMT considered decision-making in the School to be a more collegial process (although the level of consistency within the SMT group was not high). This finding is consistent with the ISEP conclusion that senior managers tend to hold more favourable perceptions of the management climate in their School than more junior colleagues (Stoll & Smith, 1997; Smith *et al.*, 1998b). Smith *et al.* report that:

... senior school managers interested in investigating such matters are well advised to seek evidence other than their own intuitive perceptions.

(ibid., p. 5)

Examination of the comments made by participants reveals a variety of perspectives that suggest dissatisfaction with the status quo. Some colleagues expressed their frustration with the 'top-down' nature of the decision-making process for key strategic issues:

SMT have a clear idea of where they want to take the School and that is where we are going, whether we like it or not.

A supporting rationale for more involvement and consultation was offered by some respondents. Some colleagues argued that, without consultation, decisions are made that do not reflect the reality of the issues faced by staff across the School:

... decisions are made by individuals who have no idea how some individuals' jobs are done.

There is considerable support for this perspective in the school improvement literature (Fullan, 1991; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992). Ambiguity is exaggerated through the loose coupling between managers' assumptive intentions and the actions of the core staff to whom they relate (March and Olsen, 1975).

Furthermore, involvement in decision-making was an expectation for some, as a democratic right:

Policy decisions should involve everyone, as we are all working professionals who are vital to the progress and implementation of decisions.

One participant did feel that the staff were consulted regularly but that the timing of this consultation was often wrong, with the consequence that ‘... opinions are often impossible to take on board’. Another colleague was directly cynical of the consultative process:

Discussions do take place. Often this does appear to be for external purposes – to seemingly involve staff when decisions have already been made. Collaboration, at times, needs to be more sincere.

This dissatisfaction with contrived collegiality (Andy Hargreaves, 1992) was, however, by no means universal. Several colleagues noted the organisational constraints that tempered intentions to operate in a more participative style, e.g.:

I feel my opinion is valued and understood but it is limited by the structures and necessities of school organisation.

Members of the SMT reflected on these constraints and further gave recognition of the management structures in place to allow involvement in major policy decisions. These structures were not always recognised as having this function.

Table 4.6 provides a summary of the mean scores of ratings given to items on ‘The School Management Scale’ questionnaire that relate to the *political structure* of the School.

Table 4.6 – ‘The School Management Scale’: responses relating to the political structure

<i>Item</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean rating</i>
8.	Teachers have a say in topics selected for the School’s staff development programme	2.0
10.	Staff participate in important decision-making	2.0
14.	Teachers have a say in the School Improvement Plan	2.7
16.	There is regular staff discussion about how to achieve school goals/targets	2.5

Ratings used: 0 = Strongly disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Uncertain; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly agree

These findings support the IQEA data and further illustrate the complexity of this issue. The greater level of agreement regarding involvement in school improvement planning may be a function of the work done during the staff conference to refine strategy prior to the current three-year strategy. There is some evidence to support the argument that issues are discussed widely but, nevertheless, the SMT view ‘holds sway’.

A further perspective is offered through an item on ‘management style’ in the *Organisational Design* questionnaire. Staff were asked:

In the present situation, which of these descriptions

- a) best fits the management style of the current SMT?
- b) best describes the way you feel the SMT ought to operate?

Rank the descriptions from 1 (best fit) to 4 (worst fit)

- I The SMT communicates its goals and expectations and relies upon relationships built on mutual trust
- II The SMT actively involves colleagues in decision-making processes in order to establish a sense of ownership over decisions and to allow decisions to benefit from a variety of perspectives
- III The SMT delegates aspects of the processes through which decisions are made, whilst retaining the co-ordination of these processes and authority over the subsequent decisions
- IV The SMT issues directives, imposing change on colleagues as it sees fit

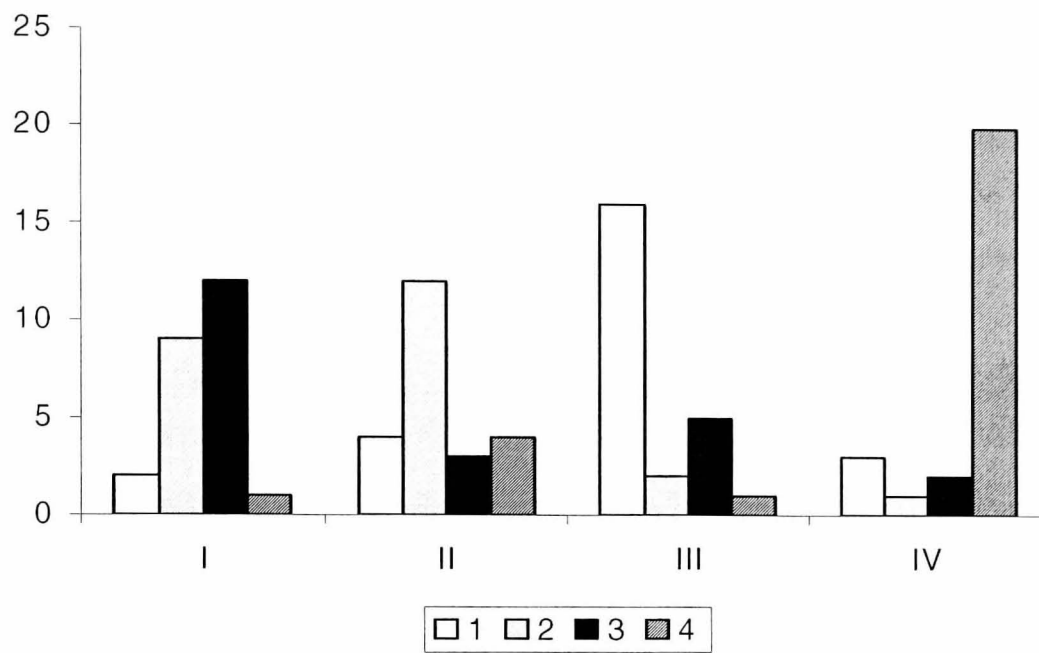
Table 4.7 shows the responses for both a) the perceived SMT management style and b) the management style that the respondents would like the SMT to adopt. Charts 4.4 and 4.5 display the overall results for a) and b) respectively.

Table 4.7 – ‘Organisational Design’: management style (overall responses)

(a = management style of SMT; b = preferred management style for SMT)

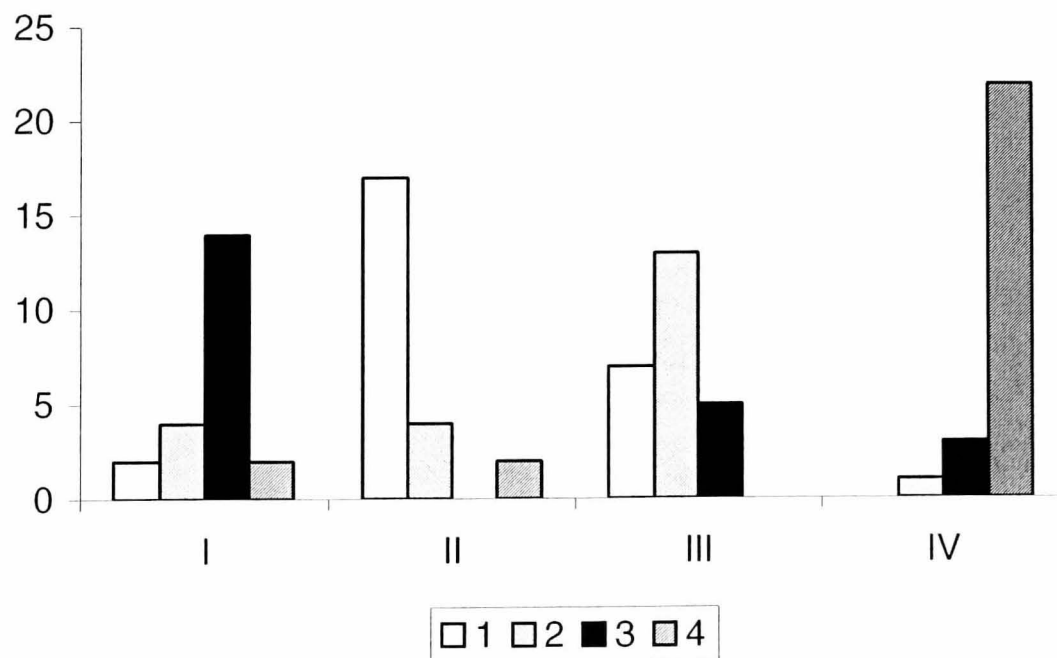
Management Style	Job Role	Management style of SMT				Preferred management style			
		Ranking				Ranking			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
I	Teacher	0	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Subj Lead	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	1
	HOF/HOY	0	1	3	0	0	0	4	0
	SMT	1	1	2	0	0	0	3	0
	LSA	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
	Non-teach	1	2	3	0	1	1	4	0
	Total	2	9	12	1	2	4	14	2
II	Teacher	2	2	0	0	4	0	0	0
	Subj Lead	0	2	1	1	3	0	0	0
	HOF/HOY	1	2	1	0	2	2	0	0
	SMT	1	1	0	1	1	2	0	0
	LSA	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	1
	Non-teach	0	4	1	1	5	0	0	1
	Total	4	12	3	4	17	4	0	2
III	Teacher	2	0	2	0	0	2	2	0
	Subj Lead	3	0	1	0	1	2	1	0
	HOF/HOY	3	1	0	1	3	2	0	0
	SMT	2	1	0	0	2	1	0	0
	LSA	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
	Non-teach	4	0	2	0	0	5	1	0
	Total	16	2	5	1	7	13	5	0
IV	Teacher	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	3
	Subj Lead	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	3
	HOF/HOY	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	5
	SMT	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	4
	LSA	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
	Non-teach	1	0	0	6	0	0	1	6
	Total	3	1	2	20	0	1	3	22

Chart 4.4 – ‘Organisational Design’: perceptions of SMT management style (overall responses)



(Rankings: 1-4)

Chart 4.5 – ‘Organisational Design’: preferred management style (overall responses)



(Rankings: 1-4)

When considering the sample as a whole, whilst respondents felt most commonly that the SMT controlled decision-making processes in the School, delegating actions to individuals and groups, e.g. through working parties (III), the overall favoured management style features greater involvement – a more participative approach (II). This was the case for both teaching staff and non-teaching staff. Table 4.7 shows that the SMT generally favoured III, consistent with the IQEA findings. However, it also illustrated a good level of support amongst middle managers for this management style. There is a reluctance here, borne perhaps of the pressures of accountability, to disperse decision-making authority widely and thinly. The most conclusive finding is the lack of identification, from either perspective and from each staff category, with statement IV, the ‘coercion and edict’ style.

The strongest feeling that was evident in the interviews was the frustration of exclusion from tactical decisions that had been made in order to implement new strategic initiatives. This seems to have relevance throughout the structure. A senior manager reflected on the difficulty of keeping pace with developments where she had not been involved in discussions to shape the direction of new initiatives and, sometimes, was not aware that initiatives were taking place:

I do not know how many decisions are reached... I find this disconcerting but accept that ... decisions (*are made by the Head and deputies that*) ... do not involve all of the Leadership Team.

A head of faculty felt strongly that there had been some important decisions regarding the routing of students onto specific vocational courses, a central area of the School’s explicit strategy for improvement, which had not involved the appropriate personnel with knowledge of the courses, decisions being ‘year team driven’. Furthermore, a full evaluation of this curriculum model from the preceding year had not informed this year’s approach. Similarly, a subject

leader felt that there had been some failings in SMT communication over some important issues and that there had been insufficient consultation, in particular, over the construction of the option blocks for the Key Stage 4 curriculum.

From the perspective of the *operating core*, a teacher argued that the issues that were most closely related to the reality of teachers' working lives, in particular their classroom teaching, merited a greater degree of involvement. From my prompts, she described how one recent initiative (the introduction of a common format for lesson planning) had been received very negatively by members of her faculty. Staff had been consulted on the design of this form, but not, fundamentally, on the principle of having a common approach to lesson planning:

I think, to be honest, with something like that, that affects a teacher very strongly because it's something that they're going to have to include in their everyday planning and everything else, err... it was a bit of a surprise and a bit of a shock, I think, and it did feel a bit like... this is what you've got to do next year, and some of the phrases that came out were like: 'teaching grandmother to suck eggs' and '...aren't we professional enough to decide what we do?', so it did feel a bit of an imposition, I think.

In general, there does seem to be a qualitative difference between the perspectives of top management, i.e. Head, deputy head, Chair of Governors, and the other staff. Consistent with the questionnaire findings, the deputy head considered that staff were consulted, rather than being involved in many decision-making processes. He considered that there were significant difficulties with a more democratic style and felt that staff needed to work within the strategic framework created for them:

I think people feel that they can't change the overall strategy, which I think is fair enough. That strategy has been thought through and discussed at length; I think that needs to be clear. So, yes, I don't have a problem with the way we operate.

A strategy that cannot be changed is a strategy for a static environment and a simple technology. Modern schooling is neither of these and although it is difficult to handle what Mintzberg describes, through metaphor, as the 'strategic umbrella' (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998), the School's present models may not be sufficiently accommodating of the constant growth of new initiatives. This is a great challenge to the School's existing management practice. The Head agreed that decisions could be improved by involving more staff in the processes but asserted clearly that 'decisions need to rest where the responsibility lies'. This observation is at the heart of the matter: the governing body and headteacher of a school have a legal responsibility for a core set of duties and it is important to understand the accountability that provides the context within which important decisions are made. However, organisations aiming for excellence have replaced bureaucratic models by flatter structures (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Bolman and Deal, 1989) and 'leadership density' throughout the school (Sergiovanni, 2001). This approach generates more creative solutions to current difficulties and builds the organisation's capacity for change. As Hoyle (1986) has argued, it is a complex task to create decision-making structures that allow efficient running of the school, satisfying the demands of accountability, and also feature participative approaches.

Micropolitical structure

The present *micropolitical* profile of the School, as represented by the IQEA data in Table 4.5 (p. 158), is broadly similar to the set of responses for the related political dimension, i.e. greater collegiality would be welcomed. In general though, there was a perception that, through this more informal

structure, more collegial approaches were in operation. Again, in comparison with other staff, the SMT rated the School's *micropolitical structure* more collegial.

Some respondents commented on the fissile nature of the School, with competing factions and heightened ambiguity of goals:

Everyone appears to have an opinion on how the school should be run. Staff frequently express their opinions but only from the safety of the cliques that have been established.

... it depends which faculty you're in as to people going in their own direction.

Competition for financial resources was noted as contributing to this micropolitical struggle:

There is some element of isolation as finances tend toward forcing colleagues to work in a Darwinian mode of fighting for some resources.

However, many of the comments made portrayed a far more integrated image of the School, stressing the network of mutual support and respect:

People do not stand on their dignity and differences in rank do not generally get in the way of open and collaborative ways of working.

Some staff who credited the School with a supportive, collaborative culture recognised that, consequently, new staff sometimes found it difficult to settle into the dominant organisational paradigm:

New staff can feel valued but often those with little experience can be made to feel outside or that their views and ideas are not as valid by certain cliques.

However, others considered that different perspectives were welcomed:

Inevitably, there is a 'Westwood way' of doing things, but it is not so inflexible as to alienate new staff with differing perspectives.

The range of comments made illustrates the variety of perspectives within this one institution. Furthermore, the reference made to cliques and the loose coupling between faculties are evidence of a rich vein of micropolitical activity (Hoyle, 1986, 1989).

'The School Management Scale' data indicated that there was a good level of integration between the SMT and the staff as a whole. Mean scores for responses to the statements 'Senior staff are available to discuss curriculum/teaching matters' and 'There is mutual respect between staff and SMT' were 3.2 and 3.1 respectively⁵, indicating broad agreement. This was reflected in several comments made in the IQEA survey, with colleagues expressing their appreciation of the support provided by the SMT:

I think the availability of the senior management team is extremely helpful and makes other staff feel like they're a real part of the school.

For some, though, a fissure (unintentionally, perhaps) does exist between the SMT and the rest of the staff. During interview, the head of year commented (of the Head and deputies): 'You seem locked in your own worlds'. She assumed that this was a function of workload and responsibility. Furthermore, the questionnaires yielded similar perspectives:

⁵ 0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Uncertain, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree

Although the staff are friendly and supportive, there appears to be a slight distance between management and staff.

SMT appear rather remote at present.

Can the SMT be both distant and accessible? One respondent provides a perspective on this paradox:

Management are highly supportive but often perceived as distant from the staff. In many ways they are approachable but decision-making procedures produce a distinctive split.

It is not clear here whether the 'split' is between different members of the team or different decision-making contexts. Either way, this reinforces the arguments relating to the political structure that the way that decisions are made is an area of concern for some staff. 'The School Management Scale' survey yielded a mean response of 2.3⁶ to the statement, 'Decision making processes are fair', suggesting uncertainty across the staff team.

Interestingly, two of the staff interviewed (a senior manager and a middle manager) referred to type of separation between the Head and deputies (as a unit) and the other senior managers. The middle manager commented that:

It is unclear at times if all members of SMT have access to all the same information. At times there is evidence of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing.

This perspective concurs with the finding of Wallace and Hall (1994) that the cohesiveness of top management can often be detrimental to integration with the staff as a whole. In this case, it may be to the disadvantage of other members of the SMT.

⁶ 0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Uncertain, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree

Maintenance structure

The IQEA data (Table 4.5) relating to the School's maintenance structure was untypical of the data as a whole. Overall, the School was perceived to be traditional in its maintenance structure; and there seemed to be approval of this approach. However, the level of consistency between respondents was relatively low, suggesting ambiguity and uncertainty. Several members of staff commented positively on the School's positional organisational structure:

There is certainly a clear and precise organisational structure, which is not removed too drastically from the realities of day-to-day roles and responsibilities.

However, a number of respondents did not feel that this structure was sufficiently defined:

... many people pull in the same direction but life is made difficult by those who do not follow standard procedures.

Management teach and do cover duties. However, a lot is expected of more junior staff. Staff are not always sure of their role or level of authority. Job specs are very wooly.

The SMT also favoured an approach that was more traditional (bureaucratic) than current practice and were consistent in this stance. One member of the SMT argued that:

Sometimes there is a gap between practice and procedures and insufficient attention paid to someone who fails to close the gap. In some areas there is a need for more clarity.

However, other staff did not describe the School's maintenance structure in these terms, characterising it as a more rotational system of negotiation and shared responsibility:

There is a strong flexibility between shared and personal responsibility depending on need and circumstances.

Although there are specific job specs, most people do get involved and help when needed. It's part of the supportive nature of the school.

In contrast, one respondent, who argued for a delegative-rotational approach to organisational maintenance, was critical of a rather formal, bureaucratic allocation of responsibilities:

Seems to be a tendency that things don't get done unless there's a specific responsibility for it.

A balanced view was articulated by a governor:

It is right that everyone knows what their role is and this can be best articulated through job description and policies. But inherent flexibility is a function of proper team playing.

Once again, the variety of opinion was striking. The balance of opinion, though, was in favour of greater role specification. This could be a potential obstacle to more collegial decision-making processes, which would be better served by a flatter organisational structure and greater distribution of responsibility throughout the school. In order to create a traditional maintenance structure alongside a more collegial political/micropolitical structure, it would be necessary to delineate core responsibilities (the technical

bureaucracy of the school) from the more flexible arena of collegial thinking and acting. In a complex, changing environment, this is a challenging remit.

Development structure

Most striking, perhaps, from ‘The Structures of School’ (Table 4.5) was the finding that staff perceive the development structure to be highly collegial and the opinion that this collegiality should be developed further. This has strong support from the SMT (especially) and governors. Professional development is seen by many staff as one of the School’s greatest strengths. Innovation and an openness to new ideas and developments were acknowledged in many of the questionnaire responses and interviews. In particular, the role of the SMT in leading new initiatives featured strongly:

There is a positive thirst in the SMT for new ideas and approaches.
They will often provide tangible support for innovative approaches.

New ideas are well supported and it is no bad thing that some of them come from management for staff to try out.

Furthermore, an item on ‘The School Management Scale’, inviting a response to the statement ‘Staff are encouraged to bring forward new ideas’, yielded a mean score of 2.9⁷, indicating broad agreement. On the whole, these comments were welcoming of whole-school improvement initiatives, with recognition given to collaborative practices that supported the change process:

Input from all staff is valued and supported in my department. Senior management are supportive of the department’s initiative and I feel that shared input has been invaluable during this last term with team discussions and peer work.

⁷ 0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Uncertain, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree

Staff are very supportive of each other and will share good practice.

However, there was a moderate level of dissatisfaction with the level of funding and resources (in particular, time) for the development of new initiatives. Moreover, a minority of colleagues felt that the School was insufficiently critical of the potential value of many new initiatives and that efforts were subsequently dissipated:

At the moment we seem to be jumping at every bandwagon going! We are playing so many different songs that it's difficult to remember the tune we are singing to!

Many new ideas are forwarded by SMT. In practice, some work and some do not.

It is interesting that despite the generally strong support for the School's collegial development structure, there is some dissatisfaction over the way that development initiatives are institutionalised. By coordinating development activity across the School, senior managers seek coherence and consistency. However, the implementation gap is sometimes too wide to bridge and initiatives fail to take root. Furthermore, if individuals do not fully understand the rationale for a course of action or else doubt its value for their own professional growth, it is likely that, at best they will resort to creative compliance, preserving their main efforts for their own passions and priorities. Senge (1992) argues that individuals need space and time to pursue their own personal goals and an overbearing, top-down approach that orchestrates activity towards predetermined organisational goals will result in a decline in employee commitment and engagement. Interestingly enough then, from the learning organisation perspective, the individualist aspect of the traditional development structure may have some advantages.

Service structure

The IQEA data indicated that the School's service structure was also considered to be largely collegial ('open and easily accessible') and that this was supported by the staff and sample of governors. Once again, the responses of 'other staff' were more moderate than those of the SMT and governors.

A perspective that emerged very clearly was the perceived lack of interest from parents in the School's affairs:

We are cursed with a rather passive and torpid set of parents. I wish they took more interest.

A member of the SMT commented that this was potentially disadvantageous as it could allow a condition of some complacency to develop:

Parents place a great deal of trust in the school and they rarely challenge what we are doing directly. It would be good to see greater parental involvement.

The two governors who commented on the School's service structure felt included as governors in the School's affairs, especially through their links with faculties.

A minority of staff expressed some frustration with a perceived lack of respect from parents and the community, with one colleague considering that the community and intake of the School itself was the source of a wider lack of recognition for staff achievements:

Most teachers are open and feel confident to discuss issues. I don't feel the general public respect teachers who teach in more challenging schools like ours.

However, there was only one comment that concurred with the autocratic-deferential view of service structure, by a member of staff who argued that parents ought not to have the right to question a teacher about their approach to teaching.

In general, according to the views of staff, the School aspires to an open partnership with its community but has little success in involving members of the community (in particular, parents) in any meaningful education-related relationship.⁸ This social structure is defined by orientation and intention, but is not developed to its potential.

The final research question concerns the School's development structure and the related conditions that are required for the School to sustain an increasing capacity for change.

vii. What is the School's capacity for change and how could this be developed further?

'The Conditions of School' (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994, 2000) is an IQEA technique that generates a more detailed analysis of the School's development structure in order to provide a profile of the factors that support and constrain a School's capacity for change. Several of these 'conditions' are similar to items on the ISEP questionnaire 'The School Management Scale' (Smith *et al.*, 1998a, 1998b) and related issues were also investigated through the questionnaire on 'Organisational Design'. The IQEA data provides a structure for this section,

⁸ There are, in fact, notable exceptions: community arts projects being especially successful.

data from the other questionnaires being used for comparison and further illustration.

The summary results from 'The Conditions of School' are illustrated in Table 4.8; the statements themselves are included as Appendix 8.

Table 4.8 – 'The Conditions of School': summary by section

<i>Key Condition</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Nearly Always</i>
INQUIRY	7%	34%	39%	20%
PLANNING	9%	33%	43%	16%
INVOLVEMENT	39%	39%	19%	4%
STAFF DEVELOPMENT	7%	29%	37%	28%
COORDINATION	12%	36%	40%	12%
LEADERSHIP	12%	41%	36%	11%

There is a striking contrast between the profile of responses for the key condition of 'involvement' and the judgements made across the other five categories. The data seem to indicate that the School does not regularly involve the full range of its stakeholders in the development of strategy and supporting policy.

The responses for 'staff development', 'inquiry' and 'planning' suggest relative strengths with 65%, 59% and 59% (respectively) of respondents indicating that the key conditions were in evidence on a regular basis (often or nearly always).

Ainscow *et al.* (2000, p. 121) include an analysis of responses from a sample of 29 schools (1493 staff) involved in the IQEA project. These data refer to the

individual statements featured in ‘The Structures of School’ questionnaire and have been obtained by converting the response categories (‘rarely’, ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ and ‘nearly always’) into Likert scores from 1 (‘rarely’) to 4 (‘nearly always’) and then producing average ratings. Cohen *et al.* (2000) warn of the illegitimate inferences that are sometimes made when categories are converted into scores, e.g. a score of 4 (‘nearly always’) cannot justifiably be considered to relate to an opinion that is twice as strongly felt as a score of 2 (‘sometimes’). These considerations are, therefore, borne in mind. The mean ratings for the School are presented adjacent to the corresponding scores for the sample, for comparison, in Table 4.9. The figures in bold print are average scores for the set of four statements that relate to a given condition.

Table 4.9 – ‘The Conditions of School’: ratings

	<i>Key Condition / Survey Statement</i>	<i>Mean Rating</i>	
		<i>School</i>	<i>IQEA Sample</i>
1.	INQUIRY	2.7	2.7
1.1	In this school we talk about the quality of teaching.	2.9	2.6
1.2	As a school we review the progress of changes we introduce.	2.5	2.5
1.3	Teachers make time to review their classroom practice.	2.2	2.3
1.4	The school takes care over issues of confidentiality.	3.3	3.3
2.	PLANNING	2.6	2.7
2.1	Our long-term aims are reflected in the school’s plans.	3.0	3.1
2.2	In our school the process of planning is regarded as being more important than the written plan.	2.3	2.4
2.3	Everyone is fully aware of the school’s development priorities.	2.5	2.6
2.4	In the school we review and modify our plans.	2.7	2.7

3.	INVOLVEMENT	1.9	2.1
3.1	In this school we ask students for their views before we make major changes.	1.5	1.8
3.2	The school takes parents' views into consideration when changes are made to the curriculum.	1.6	1.9
3.3	Governors and staff work together to decide future directions for the school.	2.2	2.4
3.4	We make effective use of outside support agencies in our development work.	2.2	2.3
4.	STAFF DEVELOPMENT	2.9	2.5
4.1	Professional learning is valued in this school.	3.4	2.7
4.2	In devising school policies emphasis is placed on professional development.	2.9	2.4
4.3	In this school the focus of staff development is on the classroom.	2.8	2.5
4.4	The school's organisation provides time for staff development.	2.3	2.3
5.	COORDINATION	2.5	2.5
5.1	Staff taking on coordinating roles are skilful in working with colleagues.	2.5	2.6
5.2	We get tasks done by working in teams.	2.6	2.7
5.3	Staff are kept informed about key decisions.	2.3	2.5
5.4	We share experiences about the improvement of classroom practice.	2.6	2.3
6.	LEADERSHIP	2.5	2.5
6.1	Staff in the school have a clear vision of where we are going.	2.1	2.4
6.2	Senior staff delegate difficult and challenging tasks.	2.2	2.3
6.3	Senior management take a lead over developmental priorities.	3.1	2.8
6.4	Staff are given opportunities to take on leadership roles.	2.5	2.3

On the whole, the analysis reveals a profile of responses that in many respects is broadly similar to the aggregated findings of the schools in the IQEA sample. It is interesting to note that 'involvement' is an area where scores are also generally lower in other schools (Ainscow, *ibid.*). Nevertheless, it seems that the School may be less effective than many others in involving students

and parents, given the relatively low scores for statements 3.1 and 3.2⁹. In the questionnaire on 'Organisational Design', one colleague expressed frustration that students had not responded in the way that she, or he, would have liked to the strategies that had been introduced. This is a common experience.

Rudduck's research (1991) illustrates the importance of gaining a greater understanding of the attitudes that influence this resistance.

Staff development is the area of clear relative strength from 'The Conditions of School', with a high emphasis on professional learning and integration of professional development into policy-making processes. Furthermore, the scores for statements 1.1, 4.3 and 5.4 indicate a sharp focus on teaching and learning in the School. Hopkins and MacGilchrist (1998) found that such an emphasis on core classroom activity was a feature of successful development planning initiatives.

Within the area of staff development, there is some level of concern that sufficient time is not provided for developmental work. 'The School Management Scale' found that the statement 'Staff development time is used effectively in the School' was met with a moderate level of agreement (mean score: 2.5), whereas 'New staff are well supported in this school' was met with a more positive response (3.0). Views were expressed that suggested some dissatisfaction, for some staff, with the School's highly coordinated approach to staff development. New staff, it could be argued, have common needs as a function of their unfamiliarity with the school culture and hence structured programmes of support and development may be seen as more appropriate.

In the section on 'leadership', the strong score (3.1) for item 6.3 contrasts sharply with the low score (2.1) for item 6.1. If senior staff take responsibility for strategic priorities but, in general, the School's vision is not clear, then this suggests that there may be some deficiencies in communication. Interestingly,

⁹ 0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Uncertain, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree

in contradiction, 'The School Management Scale' shows a good level of agreement (mean score: 2.8) with the statement 'The SMT communicates a clear vision of where the School is going'. There is, therefore, some further ambiguity here. One possibility is that the difference is simply a function of time: 'The School Management Scale' was administered several months before 'The Structures of School'. Furthermore, the former was completed by teachers only, whereas the latter included both teaching and non-teaching staff. Indeed, difficulties in communication with non-teaching staff seem likely, given the evidence of very limited involvement in the development planning process (p. 138).

Senge (1992) argues that shared visions need to be developing all the time, articulated by leaders but informed by the personal visions of each individual. A reported lack of clarity in the School's vision may be as a function of the disenfranchisement of some staff, who may feel that they have been given insufficient opportunity to share their own personal visions. Consistent with this theory, the data indicate that leadership is perceived to be a little too 'top down' with a greater score for item 6.3 than for item 6.4.

The broad nature of the leadership style of the SMT is further illuminated by responses to a question on the 'Organisational Design' questionnaire. Respondents were given the following alternative descriptions of SMT leadership style (with regard to change management):

- I The SMT is too narrow in its thinking; more radical approaches are needed.
- II The SMT is influenced too much by recent national and local developments and should be more resistant to change.
- III The SMT, quite correctly, stays with tried and tested ideas rather than responding to the latest developments and initiatives.
- IV The SMT actively promotes and embraces change and this is a positive feature of the School.

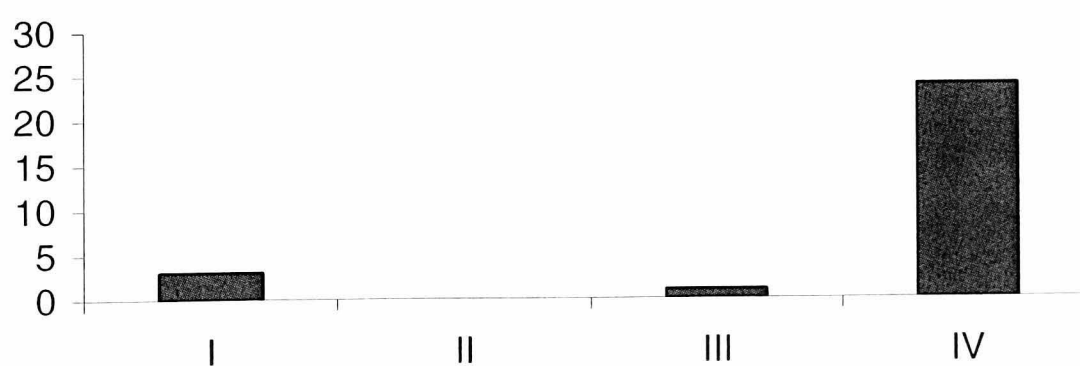
Table 4.10 shows the responses, grouped by job role; Chart 4.6 shows the overall responses in pictorial form.

Table 4.10 – ‘Organisational Design’: leadership style (responses by job role)

	<i>Teach</i>	<i>Subject Leader</i>	<i>HOF /HOY</i>	<i>SMT</i>	<i>Learn Support</i>	<i>Non- teach</i>	<i>Total</i>
I	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
II	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
III	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
IV	5	3	3	3	3	7	24
Total	5	4	4	4	3	8	28

Chart 4.6 – ‘Organisational Design’: leadership style (overall responses)

(Which statement best represents your view?)



The responses to this question were overwhelmingly uniform, considering SMT to be forward-thinking and opportunistic in their outlook and supporting this position. Of the four respondents who did not identify with this statement, three considered the SMT too conservative and conventional in its approach.

In some schools there is a strongly conservative paradigm that resists the forces of change and, in such circumstances, an assertive 'command and control' or, perhaps, visionary leadership style may be required in order to create a discontinuity and force a paradigm shift. Benchmarking, a technique within the management approach of focused reengineering (Strebel, 1994), may be an effective means of confronting an inward-looking school with the need for change. However, the evidence from Chart 4.6 suggests that the staff are supportive of the School's improvement efforts and, in this situation, a greater range of leadership styles can be more readily considered.

The analysis of the 'Conditions' data yields several results that are consistent with outcomes of other aspects of the study. The staff development profile is clearly a strength and the sustained focus on the processes of teaching and learning is especially important. Furthermore, the senior team is considered to be entrepreneurial and positive in its orientation to change. However, there may be some colleagues who have not really grasped what the senior team is trying to achieve. The lack of involvement of students and parents in key decisions was also exposed as a weakness.

The next (and final) chapter draws some conclusions from the study about school development planning and its relationship to wider strategy. The significance and utility of an appraisal of culture and social structures in drawing conclusions are further considered. Finally, the implications of the findings for further research in this area are discussed.

5. Conclusions

This concluding chapter begins with a summary of the focus and epistemological foundations for the study. This is followed by **‘Strategy and the school development plan’**, which is a conjunction of the areas of focus: ‘Strategy and strategy development’ and ‘School development planning: its role in the development and implementation of strategy’. A further section, **‘Culture, structures and the capacity for change’**, follows on. Each of these two sections begins with a review of the most salient literature. Conclusions are then drawn, with reference to the findings and conceptual framework established. The research questions formulated in the introductory chapter and used to structure the data collection and analysis are not used as a structuring device for this section, as this concluding chapter would not benefit from such a compartmentalised approach, given the significant interrelationships between the findings. In the final section, the implications of this study for the practice of strategic management are considered, as is the agenda for further research activity in this area.

Focus and foundations of the research

Through this inquiry I aimed to improve my understanding of the process of development planning and its relationship to wider strategy from the perspectives of the staff in the school in which I work. Three sets of research questions were formulated, relating to: strategy and strategy development; the practice of school development planning; and organisational culture and structure.

My concern, for this study, was not to understand the basis for the strategy for improvement that was in place. Primarily, it was to understand:

- how this strategy is implemented through the school development planning process;
- how the development planning process facilitates, or constrains, the development of further strategy; and
- what the implications of the above could be for the wider strategic planning process.

I further considered that the interpretive frame for the appraisal of these issues would be strengthened through an examination of the School's culture and the social structures that define its operational norms. Through an examination of the School's development structure, I aimed to gain an insight into the School's capacity for change management and sustained improvement, a key factor for consideration when reviewing its strategic planning processes.

In conducting the research, my understandings were drawn from the perspectives of the staff and governors with whom I work, an approach that was economical enough of my time to be viable, given the time scale and my professional commitments. As a practitioner researcher, with a position of formal authority within the School, I was aware of the potential for bias and interference. Triangulation of research techniques and respondent validation were built into the field work procedures to provide a basis for balanced judgements to be made.

Through this study, my central aim was to provide an authentic account that represented the complexity of the issue within the richness of the context, in order that the insights gained would be useful for the School's self-evaluation. On consideration of the findings, I also aimed to be in a position to postulate some further tentative conclusions that would have the potential for reflective transfer to professional practice in other schools.

Strategy and the school development plan

Summary of literature

This literature review is presented in two sections: **‘Strategy’** and **‘The school development plan’**. Considered together, they provide a framework and supporting rationale for the conclusions that follow.

Strategy

An organisation’s strategy is its means of attaining its centrally important goals. It is the route, plan, pattern or compelling idea that defines the gap between the present and a desired future outcome, or state, in the future. Within the traditional strategic planning (or ‘design school’) paradigm, a strategy is systemic: a plan is created through methods of analysis (audit, SWOT etc.), resources are allocated and responsibilities are assigned. Outcomes are defined in terms of performance indicators and methods of monitoring and evaluation are pre-determined. The strategy is then implemented and evaluated in accordance with the design features that have been established (Johnson and Scholes, 1993).

As discussed in Chapter 2, this model has been the subject of substantial criticism, most notably by Henry Mintzberg (1994) who argues that it lacks the flexibility and feedback mechanisms that are required in a changing environment with unclear goals. Within the context of education, though, strategic planning has begun to feature pre-eminently in leadership development programmes. Fidler (1996) has argued for a more strategic approach to school management that takes account of changes to the external environment. Davies and Ellison (1997, 1999) consider that more far-sighted strategies are needed, based on a forecast of future trends; this has resulted in

the introduction of the concepts of strategic intent and futures thinking into the core discourse of educational management.

There is an increasing recognition that leadership styles and change management strategies need to be matched to, or developed in the context of, the conditions in which they operate (Hargreaves, 1995; Hopkins *et al.*, 1997). Visionary leadership that confronts or overhauls the existing organisational paradigm may be appropriate where a school is dysfunctional, but resulting successes may be short-lived without strategies of a different nature that build the social structures of the school on a more secure foundation. A contrasting approach to the development of strategy is logical incrementalism (Quinn, 1978), an approach that rejects the determinism of the planning view and aims to nudge the organisation along to an improved position by small-scale experimentation and the detection of changes in the environment. Unfortunately, although this allows a strategist license to adjust a plan as a situation develops, there are associated difficulties with communicating how goals have changed in the light of new information.

Logical incrementalism and traditional ('design school') strategic planning are contrasting models with different sets of strengths and weaknesses. However, they share a common fundamental feature. Although these approaches are not exclusive of participative approaches to strategy development, neither are they inherently inclusive of their stakeholders' views and, when viewed through the lens of micropolitics, they have connotations of managerialism.

A cultural perspective on strategy development offers a contrasting choice. If strategy is considered to be a reflection of the values, beliefs and opinions of those who have most influence in an organisation, there are two distinctive ways for a leader to develop strategy. A bureaucratic solution would be to work strategy down from the top of the organisational hierarchy, with the head as master planner. Responsibility for the production and co-ordination of

operational plans, within clear parameters, can then devolved to middle managers and staff in the technostucture of the school. The structural integrity of the school's management hierarchy is therefore reinforced by this model.

An alternative approach is to place the stakeholders' views and developing practice at the heart of strategy development. This is the principle of the 'learning organisation' (Senge, 1992). In contrast to prevailing rational management practice, the real leverage for change from this perspective lies not with the design of the structures of co-ordination and accountability but with the values, beliefs and practices of the individuals. The personal goals of staff then provide the basis for the development of the organisation. Through this approach, strategies are designed to build the capacity for the organisation's self-determination through the continuous development of its staff. The central challenges are the difficulties of coherence and control. The key role of the leader is to articulate what, through its multiplicity of individual voices, the organisation is trying to say. The organisation's shared vision is the basis for strategy development.

The school development plan

School development planning was originally conceived as a practically orientated model of strategic management, but it is now increasingly conceived as subsidiary to the wider strategic planning process (Fidler, 1996). It is a process concerned with operational target-setting, rather than the development of core strategy (Davies and Ellison, 1997, 1999).

Development planning is, in principle, a collegial process (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991; MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1995a; Rogers, 1994) involving all staff. However, the participation of staff members in development planning may mask their lack of involvement, or indeed influence of any type, in the key decisions concerning the strategic direction of the school. Andy Hargreaves

(1994) argues that collegiality is 'contrived' when it is 'administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-orientated, fixed in time and space, predictable', all features of the rational school development planning process. Ironically, collegiality often functions to limit the teacher's autonomy (Hoyle, 1986; Brundrett, 1998) as the context of contrived collegiality screens the centralised control of the school's purposes and goals. From the perspective of rational strategic control, this lack of autonomy may be considered an acceptable product of a management system designed to sharpen the school's focus on the collective goals of its stakeholders. However, the difficulties of change management that ignores the values and perspectives of the front-line staff have been well documented (Fullan, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Furthermore, the model may fail to serve its purpose well where the goals are inappropriately set firm in the context of a changing environment.

A purely rational resource management cycle would feature a bidding system to reinforce the strategic control of the senior managers. This is also subject to the criticisms of managerialism (Newman & Clarke, 1994; Elliott & Crossley, 1997; Simkins, 1997). The common alternative, which recognises the 'loose coupling' quality of schools and other complex, professional-type organisations (March & Olsen, 1975), is a system of formula allocation. However, this generally devolves funds to team leaders and, ironically, decreases the level of centrally held resources that can be used in a cost-effective way to create opportunities for colleagues to critically reflect on each others' practice and envision the future of the school in a collaborative way (McMahon, 2001).

In the areas of school improvement and school effectiveness research, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of getting close to classroom practice in setting foci for school development planning. Rather than using this model to plan the introduction of external initiatives and focusing on educational outcomes, the processes of teaching and learning have, since the

mid-1990s, become the authentic focus of inquiry within this paradigm (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1995b; Hopkins & MacGilchrist, 1998). A rational ‘planning view’ approach, where a narrow focus on specific skills and processes related to classroom practice is set by a senior manager or team, is a ‘one size fits all’ model that undermines the discretionary judgement of individual practitioners. Moreover, school effectiveness research indicates that:

‘... conditions close to the primary process of learning and instruction have more impact on performance than do more distal administrative and organisational factors.’

(Scheerens & Bosker, 1997, p. 308)

Furthermore, Barth (1990b) argues that commitment to action is greater when teachers are encouraged to set priorities for their own developing practice:

‘... the moment of greatest learning for any of us is when we find ourselves responsible for a problem that we care desperately to resolve.’

(p. 136)

School development planning seems to be an underdeveloped model for a learning organisation. Its simplicity and aggregation of intent across the school masks the complexity of the network of values and beliefs that underpins professional practice.

This section concludes with a summary of the findings of this case study, with regard to the perspectives of staff and governors on the development of strategy and the school development planning process.

Findings and reflections

The School's approach to strategic planning is located within a largely rational, 'top-down' paradigm of management. This has its strengths and its weaknesses. The advantages of this approach seem to be that:

- it is consistent with government policy and the statutory framework of responsibilities for strategic management (DfEE, 1994);
- it is supportive of the School's maintenance structure (Hargreaves, 1995);
- it provides the basis for a planned approach to the allocation and deployment of resources (Simkins, 1998);
- it provides a clear basis for monitoring and evaluation (Hopkins & MacGilchrist, 1998)

These are considered in turn:

By setting a strong direction for the School, the senior team are characterised by the staff as positive and forward-looking. To a large degree, the Headteacher has been able to assert his own vision and this has been indirectly assisted by the marginal role that the Governing Body has played in the determination of strategy. The Chair of Governors is concerned that the Governing Body needs to be more fully involved in the exercise of its statutory responsibilities. This could produce a significant shift in the nature of the strategic planning process but it would retain a consistency with the present 'planning view' approach.

A further advantage of a rational, top-down organisational structure is that staff members are relatively clear about their roles and responsibilities within the school. The evidence is certainly not overwhelming but many colleagues considered that the School needed to 'tighten up' their systems and structures

further still, as some procedures were ambiguously defined and managers were sometimes insufficiently insistent when rules and routines were not followed.

The School's systems to resource strategic priorities are substantially confined to delegation from a fixed budget. Allocation of funds from within this 'school improvement budget' is a combination of formula distribution and bidding procedures, the latter being consistent with the rational budgetary process that is defined within the resource management cycle (Simkins, *op cit.*).

Management of this (albeit limited) budgetary process affords strategists the opportunity to provide resources for initiatives that are consistent with deliberate strategy.

In the absence of clear, deliberate strategy it is difficult to set targets for improvement. Emergent strategy is, by its very nature, retrospectively orientated. On the basis that targets are motivational, helping staff members to stay task-focused with specific outcomes in mind (Hopkins & MacGilchrist, *op cit.*), the 'planning view' is attractive as it offers permanence and strong direction as a foundation. This sense of direction, both at whole-school level and through team action plans, was recognised as important by many staff. Furthermore, in the context of increased involvement of the Governing Body, deliberate strategy offers a concrete basis for discussion about progress and outcomes.

The survey of opinion also revealed a number of interrelated issues of concern and these can be tentatively considered as potential disadvantages of the way that strategy is developed and implemented at present. The main issues seem to be:

- a lack of collegiality in the way that key strategic decisions are made and associated difficulties of staff ownership and commitment;

- that staff make little reference to the planning documentation which, therefore, seems to have only marginal influence over their practice;
- a lack of connectivity between the content of strategic planning documentation and the front-line individual concerns of members of staff;
- no considered involvement of pupils, at any stage, in the development and implementation of strategy.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 34), these are variations on four of the common difficulties with strategic planning (*ownership*, *implementation gap*, *ivory tower* and *complexity* respectively), articulated by Johnson and Scholes (1993).

Again, these issues are expanded below:

Other than the issues around which the research design was framed, collegiality emerged as the major theme of this study. There is substantial evidence to indicate that there is a division of opinion on this issue and that, to a degree, this is related to the organisational hierarchy. As a group, managers (and, in particular, senior managers) seem more satisfied with the status quo of carefully controlled, limited consultation. Amongst the core and support staff, more participative approaches were favoured.

The 'planning view' is a technicist model that fundamentally places the individual motivations of staff members as subsidiary to the organisational goals that are set by top management. These goals are then treated as though they are understood and have common acceptance. However, some staff reported a lack of ownership over these goals and there was only limited recognition of changes to practice being brought about as a result of the school improvement planning process. The simple, consistent form of the plan seems to act as a rhetorical device that masks its lack of real influence.

Disassembling this rhetoric, the focus on teaching and learning that is generally accepted as central to the concerns of school improvement (Hopkins & MacGilchrist, 1998) may be established more authentically by an approach that starts from the issues of professional concern of the individual teachers (Angus, 1993). The underlying philosophy of the existing system in the School is that individuals contribute to the School's development by grasping the logic of the improvements required (as explicated by broad aims and targets) and adjusting their practice to serve the greater needs of the School and their departmental team. Professional development, which is considered centrally important by the SMT, is (to a large degree) systemically built into the bureaucracy of the strategic planning paradigm, so that training days are tightly organised with (typically) a common itinerary for all teaching staff to reinforce whole-school developmental priorities. This collegial activity serves to limit teacher autonomy (Hoyle, 1986; Brundrett, 1998).

In practice, the school development planning process leaves considerable 'space' for middle managers to negotiate interpretations of core strategy in ways that match the priorities of individuals in their teams. Furthermore there is more 'space', and hence individual flexibility, through the lack of regular monitoring at team level of the action plans produced. However, symbolically (at least) the nature of the process (to a degree) is that teachers wait to be told what they ought to be doing. This is not a capacity-building approach, where improvements in the classroom are grounded in a commitment to action that originates from individual teachers. The key task for managers may be to facilitate the type of inquiry and reflection that facilitates professional growth. The problems are, in fact, greater for non-teaching staff at the School. As core strategy has been relatively unconcerned with making improvements in ancillary areas, these teams have found themselves constructing action plans to fit a strategy that had been insufficiently accommodating of the role that they played. This is a clear example of contrived collegiality (Andy Hargreaves, 1992).

The School's performance management process, based on a statutory national model (DfEE, 1998), is itself a rational-technicist model that is linked to the school improvement plan. Individuals' targets for improvement are linked to the broad areas of the existing plan. These targets originate predominantly from the appraisee but the appraiser also has some influence over what is set. It is interesting to reflect that the performance management targets themselves do not systemically influence strategy development and, in particular, the next year's school improvement plan. Consideration of the common areas of developmental priority across the staff team could lead to a more strategic 'bottom-up' approach, both in the effective organisation of professional development and in the steer given to the School's strategic direction.

The difficulties of 'moving the culture' without the will of pupils was raised as an issue and the perceived lack of involvement of pupils in the strategic planning process suggests a potential agenda for action. There is an increasing recognition of the value of pupil perspectives in school improvement (Rudduck *et al.*, 1996; Smees and Thomas, 1998; Davies and Ellison, 1995). Beresford (2000) cites MacBeath (1998) who describes how, during an international conference on education, a student made a public address following the headteacher of his school. Following the talk, whereby the head had made substantial claims regarding his knowledge of his school, the student responded tellingly: 'I see things you could never see'.

The next section considers the School's cultural profile and social structures. A brief review of the salient literature is again followed by a set of conclusions.

Culture, structures and the capacity for change

Summary of the literature

The relevant literature is summarised in three sections: 'Culture'; 'Structures'; and 'The capacity for change'.

Culture

In the drive to develop appropriate models to support the management of change and improvement efforts, a school's local characteristics and immediate circumstances have gained in significance (Hopkins, 2000, 2001). The importance of culture has been recognised as a key determinant of organisational growth and self-determination (Little, 1982; Louis and Miles, 1990; Deal and Peterson, 1990, Peters and Waterman, 1982).

Culture is the aggregated set of values and beliefs that are held by members of an organisation. It is 'reality-defining' (Hargreaves, 1995) in the sense that patterns of behaviour, e.g. approaches to problem solving, are shaped by the normalising influence of the organisational paradigm – 'how things are done around here' (Drennan, 1992, p. 3).

For the purpose of school improvement, cultural analysis can map out a proposed direction for fundamental change ('how things *ought* to be done around here'). The IQEA research technique, 'The Culture of School' (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994) is designed to integrate staff perspectives in the pursuit of this purpose. It is developed from the 'typology of school cultures' (Hargreaves, *op cit.*), a model that postulates four types of culture. These four archetypes: *formal*, *welfarist*, *hothouse* and *survivalist*, represent different combinations (high or low potency) of the school's instrumental function and

its expressive function. The former fulfills the role of keeping the institution task-focused, whereas the latter function maintains social relationships. Hargreaves' thesis is that the two functions need to be kept in balance.

Culture has been described as a web of significance that comprises rituals and routines, stories and folklore, symbols and metaphors. Furthermore, systems of management control such as rewards and performance indicators have a clear cultural significance as they indicate what is valued in the organisation. Issues of equity are important hygiene factors in an organisation (Handy, 1993). The absence of these factors has a deleterious effect on job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1996a).

Scheerens and Bosker (1997) argue that aspects of culture are most usefully conceptualised as consequences of structural arrangements as 'structural factors are more malleable than cultural aspects' (p. 308). These social structures are examined in the next section.

Structures

Structure, in the classical management theory, follows strategy (Chandler, 1962). However, in most circumstances and certainly in educational management contexts, structures cannot be disassembled and reassembled at will (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998). Mintzberg's model of organisational structure (Mintzberg, 1979) provides a skeletal template for role definition and hierarchical power relations that represents the basic structure well. However, it is the social structures that demonstrate how this configuration works in practice. The social structures are concerned with the activity of the individual members of the organisation - their interrelationships and relationship with the wider community.

Hargreaves (1995) provides a basic model of five social structures of relevance to school management. These structures (*political, micropolitical, maintenance, development and service*) relate well to the functional areas of strategic management and, in particular, key aspects of the prevailing model of school development planning. The political and micropolitical structures govern decision-making and power relations; the maintenance and development structures indicate the challenge of balancing permanence and flexibility (Mintzberg *et al.*, *op cit.*); and the service structure represents the influence of the community and external environment. For each structure, a 'traditional' and 'collegial' variation is presented, the former representing a rational, technicist view of organisational design and the latter relating to a more collaborative, democratic mode of operation. Hargreaves (*op cit.*) considers that schools are typically a combination of broadly traditional and broadly collegial social structures. As for cultural analysis, structural analysis is more revealing when staff members indicate their preferences as well as their perceptions of reality and this gap analysis also features in 'The Structures of School', the associated IQEA resource (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994).

The final section of this review concerns the conditions required for a school to sustain the capacity for change and improvement. The importance of several factors related to 'management arrangements' are recognised as being critical for school effectiveness (Scheerens and Bosker, 1997; Smith *et al.*, 1998a, 1998b) and improvement (Hopkins *et al.*, 1996, 1997; Ainscow *et al.*, 2000).

Capacity for change

Of the five social structures identified, Hargreaves (*op cit.*) argues that it is the *development structure* that is most critical in the management of change. Furthermore, he argues that a school's development structure needs to meet certain *conditions* (of collegiality) in order to build the capacity to manage change. Moreover, Stoll *et al.* (2001) report that learning opportunities for

pupils are enhanced as the school's internal capacity for growth increases. Determining this internal capacity is therefore very important for school leaders and other change agents (Fullan, 1993).

Hopkins *et al.* (1997) argue that a school's *development capacity* is determined with reference to six *conditions*, or 'management arrangements'. A contrasting and, perhaps, complementary perspective on 'management arrangements' is provided by Scheerens and Bosker (1997) who, in their comprehensive review of school effectiveness research, identify a number of leadership characteristics that appear to be critical in enhancing school effectiveness. The two sets of factors share much in common, calling for participative approaches to decision-making, leadership density throughout the school and a strong focus on school-based staff development and inquiry.

This section concludes with a summary of key findings and reflections about the School's culture, social structures and capacity for development.

Findings and reflections

The research on the School's culture was illuminating. In particular, there was a clear rejection from the teaching staff of traditional formal models of strong instrumental control and hierarchical social division. The culture was generally considered socially integrative, although there were some comments regarding the relative isolation of the senior team. There was also a remarkable strength of feeling about management control and reward systems in the School, with some colleagues expressing their dissatisfaction with the use of recruitment and retention allowances. As described by Handy (1993), these non-contingent rewards (Locke and Latham, 1990) were considered by some to undermine the social cohesion of the School. In the context of severe recruitment difficulties, this is a difficult area. Nevertheless, it is important that this perspective is considered, as the culture is continuously 'nurtured' (Senge, 1992).

On the whole, as indicated by the relatively strong profile of the *development structure*, the School's capacity for change seems strong. As described in the introduction, the School had a new leadership group and Chair of Governors. Furthermore, the Head had a strong belief in the importance of professional development. As its public performance, as measured by student outcomes, had been disappointing in its recent past, there may have been a greater than usual acceptance of the need for change amongst the staff and governors. The development structure, therefore, is likely to have been substantially advantaged by these situational characteristics. Schools, in general, rarely have such opportunities for a strong paradigm shift of this type.

However, the call for a more authentically collegial culture will not be easy to heed as the Chair of Governors, Head and deputy head communicated an understanding of their roles that seemed incongruent with a truly participative approach to strategic management. As a member of the senior team I confess to feelings of uncertainty about the implications of a radical overhaul of the strategic planning and school development planning model. Nevertheless, I am equally convinced that established practices need to be reexamined radically if the trap of 'contrived collegiality' is to be avoided.

Finally, the relationships between the case study and both professional and research-based activity are considered.

Implications for professional practice and further research

In this concluding section, an appraisal is made of the qualitative changes that could be considered in schools to processes of strategy development and implementation, in view of the findings. This is followed by a discussion

regarding the wider interest of the study and the agenda for further research in this area.

The challenge for this and, perhaps, any school is to find the right balance between planned systems of strategic management that sit well in the context of the school's formal framework of accountability and more flexible, responsive approaches that recognise, encourage and legitimate emergent strategy. The former promotes stability and continuity, whilst the latter enhances and develops the school's capacity for change, both important functional areas for school improvement. Furthermore, the two-way relationship between these two dimensions of strategy development needs recognition and development. A planning view approach (top down) could provide broad areas that define strategic priorities for action. These priorities could then be interpreted by practitioners in ways that support their own priorities for the development of their practice. Through intention and action, emergent strategy would then be developed across the School and this, in turn, would influence (bottom up) the priorities for the school's strategic plan (or intent). Importantly, though, underpinning this structural model is a commitment to team work, authentic dialogue and collegial decision-making processes - design characteristics of a learning organisation. It may be necessary for schools to work *with* shared plans but it may be more important for them to work *for* shared visions.

The immediate value of a study of this type may be in its intrinsic interest to the staff and governors of the School itself. However, as a case study account, it is also of potential interest to other educational managers and researchers. This potential utility (of case study research) is clarified by Stenhouse (in Rudduck and Hopkins, 1985):

... descriptive case studies of any kind provide documentary reference for the discussion of practice ... This is a simple, but important, function. When practitioners – or others – discuss educational practice, they commonly refer to a unique personal experience. It is as if each calls up private pictures of schools without realising the extent to which this divergence of reference disables discussion. Personal experience needs to be referred to tabled cases in order to make it publicly available.

Nevertheless, as a consequence of its research design, although this study has provided descriptive detail and raised issues it has not, as yet, had any intentionally directed influence on practice. I can claim a modest contribution to the theory of education management but a claim to have influenced education management practice requires a distinctively different research focus and methodology. Case study research in this area within the action research tradition would provide accounts that have the character and credentials to provide insights into the lived experience of improving strategic management processes. Mitchell (1995, p. 47) considers that much of the work on organisational learning 'is theoretical in nature, based on literature reviews and anecdotal evidence.' There are few insights into practitioners' understandings of the dynamic system in which they are functioning. Furthermore, the relationship between organisational learning and student learning and outcomes is in need of much greater attention by the educational community (Mulford, 1994). An argument for rigorous, focused action research inquiries does not undermine or defeat the contribution made by case study accounts such as the one that I have conducted. This study has examined practice, focusing upon the views of stakeholders rather than intending to change it directly. Its utility is that it provides a useful insight into the perceptions of key stakeholders and, as such, is a helpful resource for practitioner researchers planning to make, monitor and evaluate interventions to improve the professional practice of school development planning.

In recent years, there has been a greater acceptance of the value of practitioner research with a variety of centrally funded initiatives to support this activity. In particular, the Best Practice Research Scholarships (BPRS) programme, which has been in operation since May 2000, provides funding to individual teachers 'to undertake classroom-based, sharply focused, small-scale studies and to apply and disseminate their findings' (DfES, 2001). At Westwood St. Thomas', the work of the community of teacher researchers has been greatly enhanced through a successful group bid for BPRS funding and this has resulted in a rich variety of individual action research inquiries. Interestingly enough, one colleague is investigating the work of the group itself, i.e. how the community is sustained and the relationship between individual inquiries and the development of strategy across the School as a whole.

A further opportunity has been created through the Networked Learning Community (NLC) initiative developed by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL). Through this programme, funding is provided to facilitate networking between schools and other agencies, such as Higher Education institutions. It is intended that these networks will help the profession to learn more about how schools can most effectively manage development in a manner that:

- builds capacity;
- enhances professional skills, knowledge and values;
- mediates between local need and the national agenda for change;
- provides a powerful model for the future growth of self-confident networked schools.

(NCSL, 2001)

Networked learning communities are established both to have a direct impact on the school improvement efforts of those schools involved and also to serve

the professionally-orientated national and international research agendas relating to how schools increase their capacity for growth as learning organisations. With its explicit support for approaches that develop dispersed leadership at a school and local community level, this initiative has considerable potential to provide opportunities for the type of practitioner-led, reflexive action research studies that contribute to the development of a more sophisticated theory of strategic management in schools. The involvement of HEIs may also be critical in providing both the knowledge of the existing relevant research literature and also the expertise in facilitating enquiry-based approaches.

The Government's promotion of evidence-informed policy and practice (EIPP) provides a new opportunity for the professionalisation of teaching. However, as Wallace (2001, p. 29) notes:

It follows from the contextually differentiated nature of leadership and management that evidence-informed guidance for practitioners ... must be open-ended enough to engage with learning how to 'make it their own' in their context of use.

In order to 'make it their own' practitioners need to recognise the importance of their own values and tacit knowledge and the situational characteristics of the local and national context in which they work as the basis for understanding the potential for the reflective transfer of research findings. However, as argued earlier, perhaps the most direct and effective way of increasing the extent to which professional practice in educational leadership and management becomes evidence-informed is to increase the involvement of school leaders themselves in educational research. The centrally controlled nature of leadership development programmes such as NPQH and LPSH will exert a critical influence on the orientation that school leaders have towards educational research. The tension between programme definition (a 'planning

school' characteristic) and individualised inquiry-based learning (a 'learning school' prerequisite) requires the careful handling that the participants themselves need as school leaders. Therefore, the absence of a transparent research base for the National Standards for Headteachers, which underpin the NPQH programme is not a satisfactory basis for the programme. Furthermore, as noted by Levacic and Glatter (2001), the adoption of the Hay McBer 'Models of Excellence' for the LPSH programme in the absence of any publication of the research from which this was drawn suggests a rather reductionist and unintelligent approach to leadership development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview questions

- How would you describe the School's current aims and its strategy for achieving these aims?
- Are these aims the right ones, and are there currently any other competing priorities?
- How does the process of developing a strategy for improvement work in this School?
- Is the period of three years the right duration for a strategy?
- Are the right people involved in the development of strategy?
- What is the relationship between the School's three-year strategy and the School Improvement Plan?
- How well does the school improvement planning process work?
- How do you feel about the layout of the SIP and, in particular, the format of Action Plans?
- How do you feel about the current method used to allocate resources to support Action Plans?
- How well is progress against SIP targets monitored and evaluated? (How much use is made of the Plan itself?)
- How do you feel, in general, about the way that key decisions are made in the School?
- Are there any issues that have caused you concern, especially in the way that they have been handled by SMT?

Appendix 2 – ‘Organisational Design’ questionnaire

Staff Questionnaire: Westwood St. Thomas’ School - Organisational Design and Management Style

This questionnaire is designed to help the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the School to understand how staff feel about the culture of the School and the management style adopted by SMT. The results of this questionnaire survey will also inform my research on strategic management. There are ten questions in all. Please return your completed questionnaire to **Stuart Jones**, preferably by **9th March**. There is no need to write your name.

1) Please indicate your job role by ticking one of the boxes.

• Teacher / Co-ordinator (up to one responsibility point)	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Subject Leader / Second-in-Faculty (two responsibility points)	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Head of Faculty / Head of Year / Professional Tutor (four/five responsibility points)	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Senior Manager (member of the Leadership Group)	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Learning Support Assistant	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Non-teaching staff role	<input type="checkbox"/>

2) Please also indicate your gender.

• Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Male	<input type="checkbox"/>

3) For how many complete years have you worked at this school?

• 0-1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
• 2-4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
• 5-10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
• More than 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

You should tick one box in the column headed a) and one box in the column headed b).

	a)	b)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SMT dictates the School's aims and make the important decisions; divisional teams (e.g. departments, year teams) are concerned with operational detail only. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divisional teams make all decisions that have direct importance to team members; the SMT operates in an administrative style. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SMT governs overall strategy but other important decisions are made by divisional teams. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Where your responses for a) and b) differ, please comment on why you feel a change in approach should be made?

--

5) Consider the following statements about working relationships.

- Everyone here is aware of his or her own responsibilities.
- Staff work collaboratively here.

a) Which of these issues do you feel that the SMT judges to be more important than the other? Mark a cross on the line below to show the balance of importance (e.g. if you think that the SMT is not at all concerned that staff work collaboratively, mark a cross at the extreme left of the line; if you think that the SMT is equally concerned about the two issues put a cross in the middle of the line)

Everyone here is aware of his or her own responsibilities		Staff work collaboratively here
---	--	---------------------------------

b) Now mark a cross on the line below to show how you personally view the balance of importance between these two issues.

Everyone here is aware of his or her own responsibilities		Staff work collaboratively here
---	--	---------------------------------

- 6) Consider the following statements about organisational structure.
- The School needs to be able to respond quickly as circumstances change.
 - Systems and structures need to be in place that ensure a consistency of approach.
- a) Mark a cross on the line to show where you think the SMT views the balance of importance of these issues.

The School needs to be able to respond quickly as circumstances change	<div style="border-top: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>	Systems and structures need to be in place that ensure a consistency of approach
--	---	--

- b) Now mark a cross on the line below to show how you personally view the balance of importance between these two issues.

The School needs to be able to respond quickly as circumstances change	<div style="border-top: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>	Systems and structures need to be in place that ensure a consistency of approach
--	---	--

- 7)
- a) For which qualities/attributes/achievements are staff rewarded in this school?
- Please write down the first three things that occur to you?

i)	
ii)	
iii)	

- b) For which qualities/attributes/achievements *ought* staff to be rewarded in this school? Please write down the first three things that occur to you?

i)	
ii)	
iii)	

- 8) Tick the box next to the statement that best represents your view.

• The SMT is too narrow in its thinking; more radical approaches are needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• The SMT is influenced too much by recent national and local developments and should be more resistant to change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• The SMT, quite correctly, stays with tried and tested ideas rather than responding to the latest developments and initiatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• The SMT actively promotes and embraces change and this is a positive feature of the School.	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 9) Read the statements in the table below, in the context of the School's present situation and senior team.

Using the column marked a), rank the statements from 1 to 4 , writing 1 in the box next to the statement that is the most representative of the SMT's style and writing 4 in the box next to the statement that is the least representative.

Using the column marked b), rank the statements from 1 to 4 , writing 1 in the box next to the statement that indicates how you feel the SMT *ought* to operate (given present circumstances) and writing 4 in the box next to the statement that indicates the management style you favour least.

Please distribute each of the numbers 1 to 4 once and only once in column a) and then distribute each of the numbers 1 to 4 once and only once in column b).

	<i>a)</i> <i>(Ranking)</i>	<i>b)</i> <i>(Ranking)</i>
• The SMT communicates its goals and expectations and relies upon relationships based on mutual trust that have been built up with colleagues.		
• The SMT actively involves colleagues in decision-making processes in order to establish a sense of ownership over decisions and to allow decisions to benefit from a variety of perspectives.		
• The SMT delegates aspects of the processes through which decisions are made, whilst retaining the co-ordination of these processes and authority over the subsequent decisions.		
• The SMT issues directives, imposing change on colleagues as it sees fit.		

10) Please use the space below to make any further comments relating to the organisational design of the School – its management structure, decision-making processes and culture.

Thank you for your help in completing this questionnaire. Please leave it in my pigeonhole or tray, preferably by Friday 9 March 2001. **Stuart Jones.**

Appendix 3 – ‘The School Management Scale’

The School Management Scale – A Questionnaire for Teachers

Overleaf is a short questionnaire designed to provide a measure of a school's management climate. It will be used to make a contribution to the School's ongoing efforts to improve. **Please return your completed questionnaires to Stuart Jones** (in the envelope attached) **by Monday 15th October**, retaining your anonymity. Confidentiality is assured. For this survey, it is only the whole school scores that are of interest, not the responses of any individuals. Thank you, in anticipation of your response.

For each statement, put a score of 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 against each statement, where the score measures the extent to which you agree that the statement reflects what is happening in this school at this time.

0 = Strongly disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Uncertain, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Rating (0-4)</i>
1. There is effective communication amongst teachers.	
2. Decision-making processes are fair.	
3. Senior staff are available to discuss curriculum/teaching matters	
4. New staff are well supported in this school.	
5. Whole-school meetings are worthwhile.	
6. There is mutual respect between staff and SMT in this school.	
7. Staff feel encouraged to bring forward new ideas.	
8. Teachers have a say in topics selected for the School's staff development programme.	
9. There is effective communication between SMT and teachers.	
10. Staff participate in important decision-making.	
11. The SMT communicates a clear vision of where the School is going.	
12. Staff development time is used effectively in the School.	
13. Teachers like working in this school.	
14. Teachers have a say in the School Improvement Plan.	
15. At staff meetings, time is spent on important things rather than on minor issues.	
16. There is regular staff discussion about how to achieve school goals/targets.	
17. The SMT openly recognises teachers when they do things well.	

Appendix 4 – Staff Evaluation of Training and Development Day using IQEA Resources

Staff Conference, 7 Jan. '02: 'Strategic Thinking'

Staff Evaluation

Response rate: 100%

(5 = Excellent; 4 = Good; 3 = Satisfactory; 2 = Disappointing; 1 = Very Poor)

RATING		COMMENTS(+)	COMMENTS (-)
1. How comprehensive was the supporting documentation?			
4.1	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very clear and well presented. As a non-teacher I found it helpful. • Good structure to documentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather dense. • More background on the a.m. sessions? • Too much material for 'Futures' session.
2. How do you rate the lunch and refreshments provided?			
4.6	Excellent/ Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Really tasty – good choice • Yummy! • Superb food! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another main course ought to have been offered.
3. How do you rate the introduction?			
4.1	Good		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would have been interesting to hear the Head's opinion of what Westwood should be.

4. How do you rate the 'Perspectives on the School: Culture, Structure and Conditions' session?			
4.3	Good/ Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I really enjoyed the section with the buttons and screen.</i> • <i>Excellent use of CPS.</i> • <i>The session went really quickly – really different.</i> • <i>Correctly pitched – looking forward to the analysis.</i> • <i>Interesting range of activities that encouraged reflection.</i> • <i>Snappy and interesting.</i> • <i>Brilliant session!</i> • <i>Gave a good overview of the school ethos.</i> • <i>Very innovative.</i> • <i>Varied, relevant and entertaining.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Geared at teaching staff only – most of it went over my head. If I had had more time I could have completed the gold sheets.</i> • <i>Difficult to answer some questions directly geared to teaching.</i> • <i>Needs further discussion.</i>
5. How do you rate the 'Progress through Current Strategy – Audit of Opinion' session?			
3.9	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Very useful to exchange and share views.</i> • <i>Looking forward to the analysis.</i> • <i>Informative and thought provoking.</i> • <i>Good group feeling – lots of honest comments.</i> • <i>Good constructive comments.</i> • <i>Lots of valuable discussion.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I mainly listened as it was really for teaching staff, but I did enjoy the session (listening to teachers' views).</i> • <i>Was difficult at times to prevent discussion from dwelling on the same issue.</i> • <i>Needs further discussion.</i> • <i>Could have done with brief written notes on each of the five areas to refresh memory.</i> • <i>More time would have been beneficial.</i>

6. How do you rate the 'Futures Thinking' session?			
3.6	Good/ Satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This was probably the hardest but most worthwhile – maybe a whole day issue.</i> • <i>Challenging yet creative.</i> • <i>Really enjoyed this.</i> • <i>Brilliant to have the opportunity to discuss issues.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not enough time and I felt that it was for teaching staff – I mainly listened.</i> • <i>Would have liked this session to have been more active and imaginative.</i> • <i>An extra 15 minutes would have been useful.</i> • <i>Maybe less categories and more clearly identified aims.</i> • <i>A more visual approach for this slot. Bit of a let down after a fun morning – we should have picked 1 or 2, not 5.</i> • <i>A little confusing as to what was required.</i> • <i>No real outcome.</i> • <i>Needed more detailed guidance.</i> • <i>Needs further discussion.</i> • <i>Too many diverse subjects – sharper focus needed.</i>
7. How do you rate the plenary session?			
3.7	Good/ Satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Interesting feedback – concise and to the point.</i> • <i>Appropriate matters covered succinctly.</i> • <i>Better than usual plenary sessions.</i> • <i>I liked seeing the responses to the grid.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Difficult to draw conclusions?</i>

8. Overall, how well did this Staff Conference improve your understanding of the School, its current strategy and future challenges and provide an opportunity for you to contribute to its future strategic direction?			
4.0	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I certainly enjoyed the day. It was something I hadn't done before. I had been worried about it, but it wasn't so bad.</i> • <i>Well worthwhile. I hope this sort of review can be done annually.</i> • <i>It was good to be invited – thanks.</i> • <i>Provided useful insights into the structure and purpose of the school and its consideration of staff involvement.</i> • <i>I learnt a great deal about attitudes and perceptions of school life.</i> • <i>Per session, excellent in every respect.</i> • <i>Very informative day and a good opportunity to air views.</i> • <i>It was good to look at where we are, particularly to reflect on how things have changed (mostly positively). As things change, we need to too.</i> • <i>Thanks for involving a wide range of staff.</i> • <i>Very good venue for this type of whole school conference.</i> • <i>Good – it was nice to be able to discuss key issues openly, away from school.</i> • <i>Very interesting results.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If non-teaching staff are going to be invited on a regular basis, could there be a time-slot just for them to discuss an issue familiar to them. I think I would enjoy the day more if I could participate more.</i>

Appendix 5 – ‘The Culture of School’: text for group activity cards (secondary staff version)

Ours is a really friendly school and we believe in people getting on, whether it's staff with staff, teachers with students, or the kids among themselves. Nobody gives of their best unless they feel valued and wanted – so that's where our educational philosophy begins. Social development is as important as academic development and what doesn't get noticed in exams we hope gets reflected in our PSE work and in students' records of achievement. Of course, some students have lots of problems at home and though we obviously can't solve all of those we can't just ignore them either. It's a caring school and the staff are cared about as well as the kids.

(on yellow card)

It's no soft option being a teacher here. It's OK if you're a strong sort of person with lots of self-confidence. If you're not, well it can be hard controlling the kids and getting any work out of some classes. I can't say I'm really happy about the direction the school's taking and morale in the staffroom isn't what it might be. I get by, and generally keep myself to myself. After all, teaching's just a job and you have to have your own private life as well. I don't think the place gets the best out of me, and to be honest if the school were inspected tomorrow and they saw us as we really are, we'd get a bad report. The trouble is I don't really think there's much chance of any major improvement for teachers or kids without a very radical shake-up.

(on blue card)

Our philosophy is to educate the whole person, not just the bits that fit schools. Of course, we accept that exams matter and there's quite a bit of pressure on students to give of their best. But we also believe that the social and emotional side of young people needs to be developed too, and every teacher is involved in pastoral care as well as the academic side of teaching. You could describe relationships as close – we're quite a close staff and that spills over to the students too. Team spirit is part of the ethos and there's not much room for loners. You have to give one hundred per cent here: teaching is emotionally as well as intellectually draining, so we all need the holidays to recharge ourselves for the next term.

(on green card)

We regard ourselves as a well-disciplined sort of school, one that sets store on traditional values. The head runs the place as something of a 'tight ship', with high expectations of us teachers. There's a strong emphasis on student learning and we're expected to get good exam results and everybody's very proud when we do. We also like to do well in games and athletics, which is another important aspect of achievement. We expect students to be fairly independent and not to be mollycoddled. We're clear what the school stands for and what we're about, so we are naturally rather suspicious of trendy ideas, and put more trust in what's been shown to work best through past experience.

(on pink card)

Appendix 6 – ‘The Structures of School’: example of questionnaire sheet

(1) Please tick your position in the school:

Senior Management ☐ Other Staff ☐ Governor ☐

(2)

<p>‘The major policy decisions in this school are made by the head and the senior staff, though there is consultation with the rest of the staff sometimes.’</p>										<p>‘Before major policy decisions are taken, there’s a full and free discussion by the whole staff, and attempts are made to get as full agreement as possible.’</p>
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

(2a) The **PRESENT** position of your school = ✓
Please mark this position in **ONE** of the above boxes.

(2b) Describe your school in this box:

In this school ...

(3) The **IDEAL** position for your school = *
Please mark this position in **ONE** of the above boxes.

Appendix 7 – ‘The Structures of School’: structure-culture complexes

	<i>Traditional school</i>	<i>Collegial school</i>
POLITICAL STRUCTURE	‘The major policy decisions in this school are made by the head and the senior staff, though there is consultation with the rest of the staff sometimes.’	‘Before major decisions are taken, there’s a full and free discussion by the whole staff, and attempts are made to get as full agreement as possible.’
	Feudal-consultative	Egalitarian-participative
MICROPOLITICAL STRUCTURE	‘There are very different views among the staff and there’s a tendency for staff to want to go in their own direction. Many staff have their own little cliques. It’s best to keep on the right side of management, who are a bit distant from the staff.’	‘There’s no deep split between management and staff. Everybody pulls in the same broad direction and there tends to be an agreed way of doing things. It’s important for a new teacher to fit in with the rest of the staff and adapt to our ways.’
	Fissile-ingratiative	Integrative-exclusive
MAINTENANCE STRUCTURE	‘Everybody has a precise job spec and there are rules and policies for most things. In this school at least everybody knows what’s what. Senior staff take clear responsibility for managing the school.’	‘Jobs tend to be shared among the whole staff – rotten jobs as well. Everybody’s expected to pitch in as and when it’s needed. What you can contribute at the time is more important than seniority or job spec.’
	Bureaucratic-positional	Delegative-rotational
DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE	‘The best way to try anything new is to do it in the classroom. Of course, there are some good ideas around, but they usually come from management rather than from classroom teachers, so it’s a bit of a top-down school.’	‘If teachers want to try out new ideas, this is a really supportive place. And often there’s somebody to try them out with. Staff are encouraged by management, who try to make time for them to do new things.’
	Individualist-hierarchical	Institutional-collaborative

SERVICE STRUCTURE	<p>'Staff here deserve more respect from parents and the general public, who think they know as much about education as we do. We prefer to keep outsiders at arm's length. They should trust us to do the job we're trained for.'</p>	<p>'Staff here are open and let parents and governors and other people from outside see us as we are, warts and all. The way we avoid conflict is to talk things through frankly with our partners – it's the best way to get respect.'</p>
	Autocratic-deferential	Contractual-accountable

**Appendix 8 – ‘The Conditions of School’ ratings scale:
statements relating to key conditions**

INQUIRY/REFLECTION	
1.1	In this school we talk about the quality of our teaching
1.2	As a school we review the progress of changes we introduce
1.3	Teachers make time to review their classroom practice
1.4	The school takes care over issues of confidentiality
PLANNING	
2.1	Our long-term aims are reflected in the school’s plans
2.2	In our school the process of planning is regarded as being more important than the written plan
2.3	Everyone is fully aware of the school’s development priorities
2.4	In the school we review and modify our plans
INVOLVEMENT	
3.1	In this school we ask students for their views before we make major changes
3.2	This school takes parents’ views into consideration when changes are made to the curriculum
3.3	Governors and staff work together to decide future directions for the school
3.4	We make effective use of outside support agencies (e.g., advisers and lecturers) in our development work
STAFF DEVELOPMENT	
4.1	Professional learning is valued in this school
4.2	In devising school policies emphasis is placed on professional development
4.3	In this school the focus of staff development is on the classroom
4.4	The school’s organisation provides time for staff development
COORDINATION	
5.1	Staff taking on coordinating roles are skilful in working with colleagues
5.2	We get tasks done by working in teams
5.3	Staff are kept informed about key decisions
5.4	We share experiences about the improvement of classroom practice

LEADERSHIP	
6.1	Staff in the school have a clear vision of where we are going
6.2	Senior staff delegate difficult and challenging tasks
6.3	Senior management take a lead over development priorities
6.4	Staff are given opportunities to take on leadership roles

Appendix 9 – Foreword to the School Improvement Plan 2000/01 for Westwood St. Thomas' School

School Improvement Plan 1st April '00 – 31st August '01

This four-term plan forms the first part of a wider strategy for improvement over a period of three years and one term from 1st April 2000 to 31st August 2003. In this planning document there is a description of progress made against the action plans that followed the Ofsted and Section 23 reports in October 1998. This document also includes an outline of the planning process followed by the School, the School's identified targets for examination results and the individual plans for each faculty/section. These plans are supported by a description of the School's training plan and a description of the School's resource allocation to support the targets.

The planning process has included all classroom-based staff and members of the Governing Body. A staff meeting in October 1999 was used to identify the main areas for future school improvement. An SMT planning day in November highlighted five main areas of focus for this improvement:

- The design of the curriculum;
- The quality of teaching;
- Management responsibilities;
- Pupil support systems;
- The learning structure.

These formed the focus for a two-day conference for all teaching staff in January 2000, at Urchfont Manor. Following the conference an action plan was developed for each of the five issues identified.

Part of the plan for improvement is for the identified management responsibilities for school middle managers to reflect a greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, including classroom observation. These managers are being helped in this process through a programme of training and support.

Pupil support systems will include tracking the attainment levels of all pupils throughout years 9, 10 and 11. They will also include some focused work on improving the levels of achievement of those pupils who are on the borderline between an anticipated 'C' and 'D' at GCSE level.

The School's learning structure, including term dates and the length of the school day, has led to a full debate amongst the members of the school community and the other neighbouring schools about the relative benefits of a five-term school year. This discussion will continue into the next school year before any decision is taken. The School has also moved to a timetable structure that has 6 x 50-minute lessons per day, in place of the previous 7-lesson system.

In September 1999 new management responsibilities for the deputy heads were identified. These focused on the quality of teaching and the quality of learning. These posts represent the two priority issues within this year's school improvement plan. Each faculty/section has been asked to consider the action they will take to improve the quality of teaching in their area and the way that they will respond to new curriculum structures.

The audience for this plan may range from LEA inspectors to parents of pupils attending the school. Its main purpose is as a working document, referred to at year team meetings, faculty meetings and staff meetings throughout the year. All teaching staff are encouraged to be familiar with the section that directly relates to their area and to act on it. The plan will be a success if it actively encourages some identifiable further improvements in the quality of teaching

and if the curriculum changes planned lead to better outcomes for pupils. Initial progress made against this plan will be reviewed in November 2000.

Appendix 10 – Guidance notes and overview for SIP 2000/01

Guidance Notes:

(Action plans and bids for capitation and professional development funds)

1. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) comprises action plans outlining proposed improvements for:

- departments (rather than faculties);
- year teams;
- support staff teams; and
- key issues (for which members of SMT and other nominated staff have responsibility).

2. Department action plans will focus on two areas, relating to curriculum design (as represented in schemes of work) and the quality of teaching and learning (accommodating the ‘Guidelines for Effective Teaching’ and the principles of accelerated learning). This is a re-interpretation of the two strands of the three-year plan:

- Maximise outcomes through curriculum change;
- Improve the quality of teaching.

Other action plans should be written in the context of the stated overall aims for improvement, but need not be divided into these two areas.

3. All action plans should list alphabetically (a), b), c), d),) targets set. It should then be straightforward to cross-reference this section to the other sections by use of the same coding system. Department action plans should list

targets 1.a), b), c), and 2. a), b), c), ... separately, whereas other action plans will have only one list of targets (1.a), b), c),).

4. 'Performance indicators' are the standards, or benchmarks, (either qualitative or quantitative) used to judge the effectiveness of the action plan, whereas 'Methods of monitoring and evaluation' refers to the processes to be employed to determine the ongoing progress of the course of action.

5. Items listed in action plans should be developmental in nature. Actions required to support existing approaches and maintain levels of resourcing should not feature in the plan and its supporting resource and training plans. Systems required to manage formula-allocated capitation are a matter for individual faculties and other teams. Please be aware of the need for an up-to-date inventory of stock; this may be audited at any time.

6. All SIP documents are available on the curriculum network (the file names are self-explanatory). The action plan templates are MS Word documents constructed using text boxes in order to impose a limitation of two sides of A4. Please use 'Arial', font-size '11'.

7. The resource plan and training plan are MS Excel worksheets. The referencing system (described above in Note 3.) should be used in the 'Action Plan Ref.' column, to show how these plans have been produced to support the implementation of the action plan. **IMPORTANT:** Lists produced in each section of both plans should be in priority order. The resource and training plans have built-in formulas: total costs will be calculated automatically. VAT should not be included.

8. For the training plan, estimates will need to be made. A full day's supply cover for one person will be 6 periods. At this stage (in the absence of next year's timetable), estimates should be made on the basis of this maximum

requirement; the supply charges per period have been set at a low value, partly to reflect this potential inflation of their true value. In order to ascertain approximate costs of external courses, it may be useful to browse through the professional development courses appropriate to your curriculum interest; these are stored in the staff room. Travel costs (by car) are typically 30p per mile.

9. The 'Furniture and Learning Environment' section of the resource plan is linked to a different budget heading to sections 1 and 2. An action plan reference is not necessary for this section. Details of suppliers, page numbers etc. could usefully be noted in this column.

School Improvement Planning - Overview

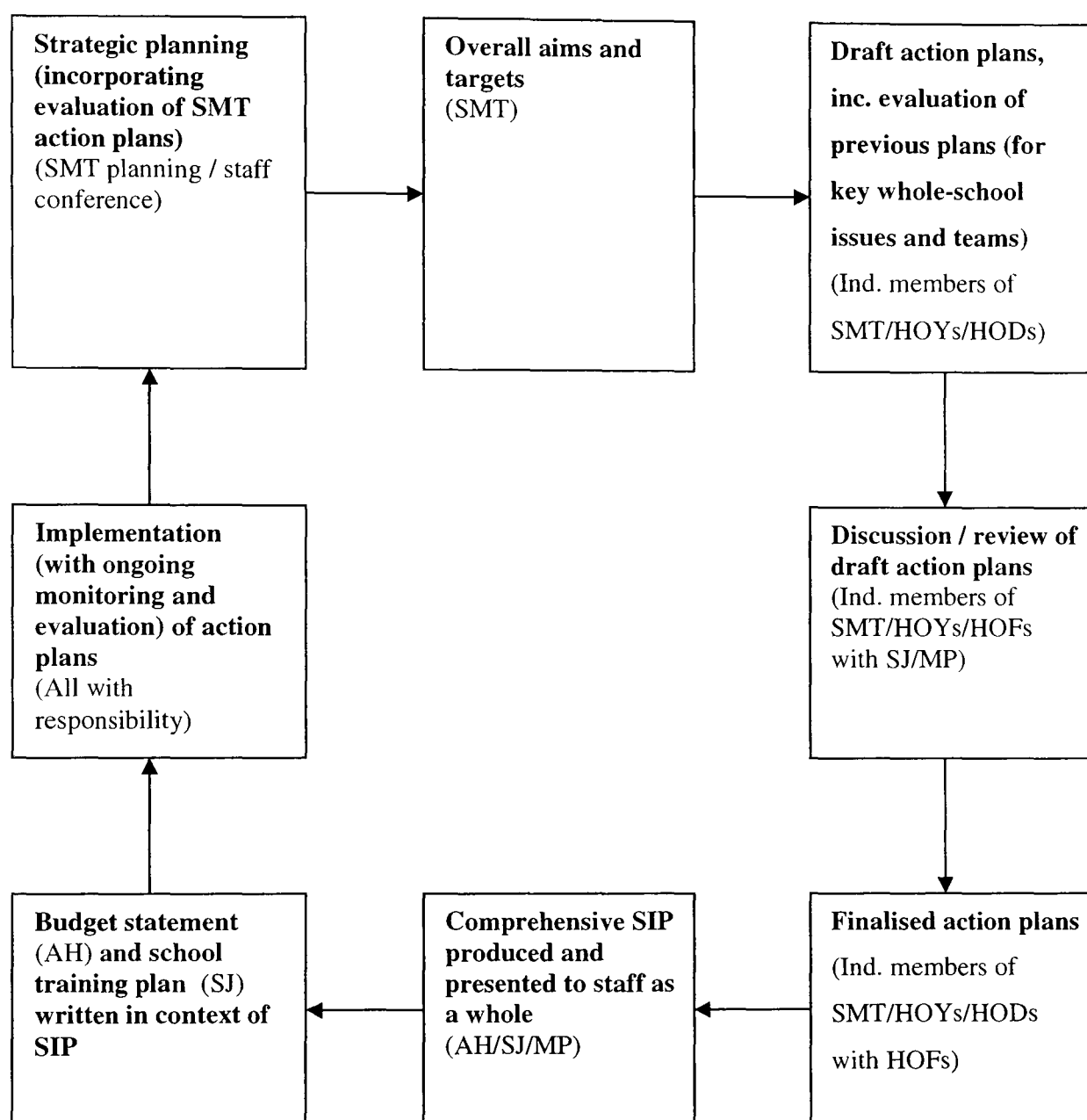
1. Completion date and duration:

- a) date for issue of '00/'01 Improvement Plan: 2/4/01;
- b) the plan will cover the period 1/4/01 to 31/8/02.

2. Features of the plan:

- a) preface – evaluating previous plan and setting out broad priorities for this plan;
- b) Ofsted action plan – review and prioritisation of outstanding issues;
- c) statutory targets for '01/'02;
- d) performance management plan, outlining the cycle of appraisal meetings and reviews;
- e) action plan for each key whole school issue produced by relevant member of SMT;
- f) action plan for each department, year team and other team (consistent format / brief evaluation of previous plan / cross-referenced to overall aims / linked performance indicators / indication of processes of monitoring and evaluation);
- g) linked to both d) and e), a resource plan, i.e. quantification of physical resource requirements of elements of action plans (to guide budgetary allocations and, for teams, procurement and management of capitation monies);
- h) linked to both d) and e), a training plan, i.e. identification of professional development needs of teams and individuals linked to action plans (with cost estimates);
- i) documents will be produced (by MP and SJ) to summarise resource plan and training plan allocations. These summaries will replace the individual draft plans in the final SIP. The training plan will also incorporate requests for training made through the appraisal process.

3. Process:



Appendix 11 – *Investors in People* submission (background information)

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE Submission for Assessment– Background Information

‘Westwood St. Thomas’ Church of England School is situated on the western outskirts of Salisbury and serves the area of Bemerton (the largest housing estate in Salisbury), the nearby town of Wilton and the surrounding rural area. The School serves an established area comprising a mix of owner-occupier, local authority and housing association accommodation. The School is a broadly average sized 13-19 age range, comprehensive and receives almost all of its students from the remaining enclave of three 9-13 age range middle schools in the Salisbury area. Within the city of Salisbury, there is a mix of selective and comprehensive education available to parents. Many of the more able students leave the middle schools at age 11 to take up grammar school places. Both the key stage 2 performance of the contributory middle schools and the School’s own standardised test data indicate that the ability of the student cohort, though having a full range of ability, is significantly biased to the lower end of the ability range. Far more students than usual, in a comprehensive school, are significantly behind their age expectation in attainment at entry and many have a range of numeracy and literacy difficulties. The overall ability of the student cohort is well below that of a typical comprehensive school. Whilst all students are well cared for, many experience a variety of social and economic disadvantage in their backgrounds. The School, though currently under-subscribed, is popular with parents and there are currently approximately 700 pupils on roll. The proportion of students entering the School with special educational needs is high for its type and represents a growing trend.’

‘The School is well supported by its community and, through a variety of activities, plays a successful and important community role. High expectations are set for pupils and many experience real success, both academic and wider, during their time at Westwood St. Thomas’. The School has a clearly expressed set of aims and beliefs, which successfully promote appropriate attitudes, values and behaviour in all pupils. These aims and beliefs are supported by a clear Governors’ curriculum policy, which gives appropriate emphasis to all pupils’ spiritual, moral, social, cultural and physical development, together with the subjects of the National Curriculum, within a Church School ethos. Pupils benefit from the strong ethos that supports the purposeful learning environment.’

‘The School is committed to improvement and the Governing Body have set appropriate targets for 2000 and beyond.’

(Extracts from Ofsted Report, October 1997 – Characteristics of the School)

The School now has a new Senior Management Team (SMT). The Headteacher is in his second year in post; the Deputy Head is in his fourth year; the Acting Deputy is in his second year as a member of the SMT and is Acting Deputy for the current academic year; one of the Senior Teachers is in her second year in SMT; and the other Senior Teacher is a long-established SMT member. The Chair of Governors will be newly appointed from October 2000. Furthermore, 15 staff (of 65) began at the School at the beginning of this academic year.

The School Improvement Plan has prioritised the following areas:

- a) Improving the quality of teaching;*
- b) Improving the curriculum design;*
- c) Making better use of assessment data for individual pupil target-setting;*

- d) Improving the effectiveness of management structures;*
- e) Improving the structure of learning structures, i.e. the school day and the school year.*

Of these, a) and b) were recognised as being the most central to the School's strategy to raise standards of teaching and learning and hence improve pupil outcomes. The Deputy Head (Teaching) and Deputy Head (Learning) have responsibilities that drive areas a) and b) respectively. The Deputy Head (Teaching) is also the Staff Development Co-ordinator.